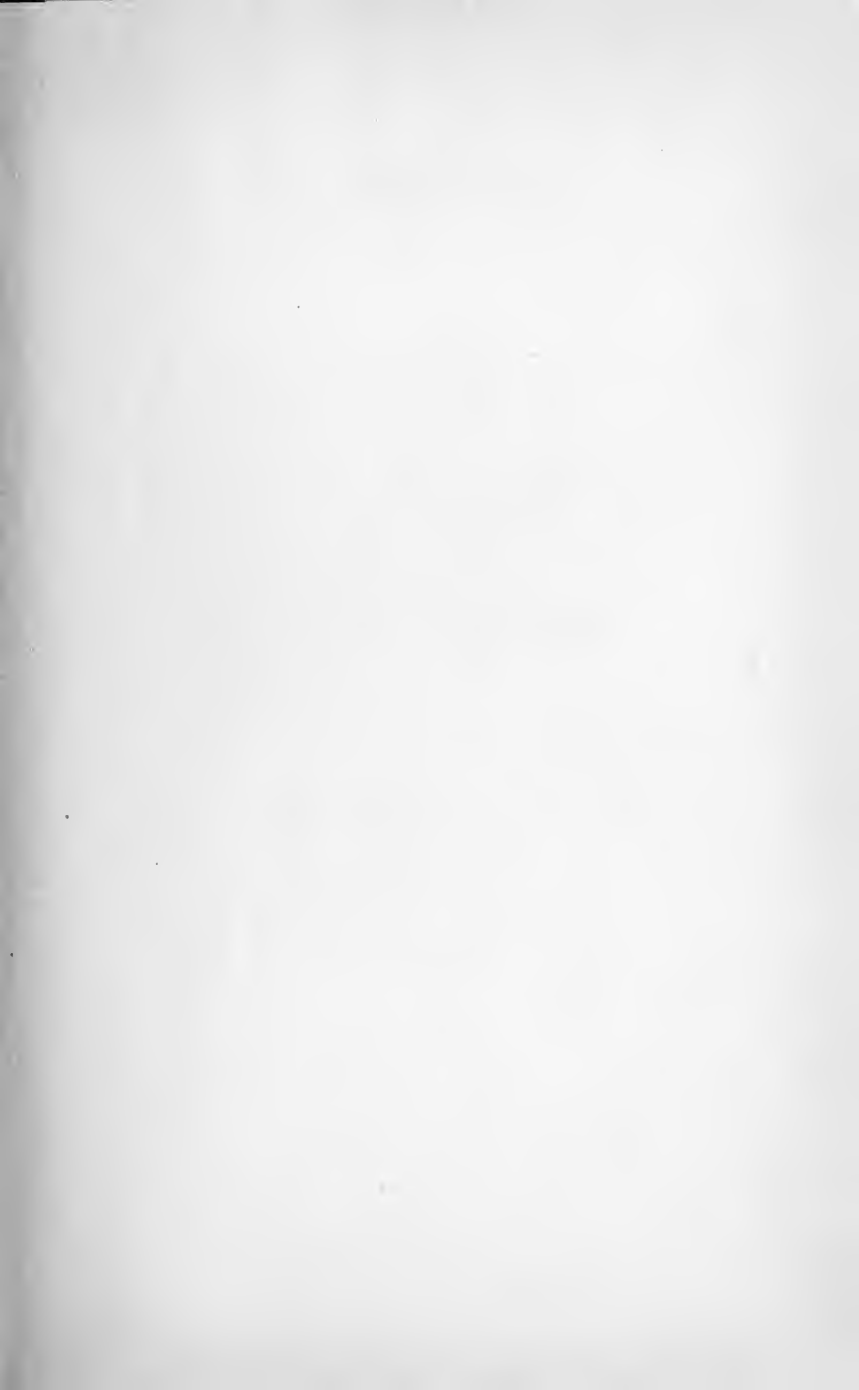
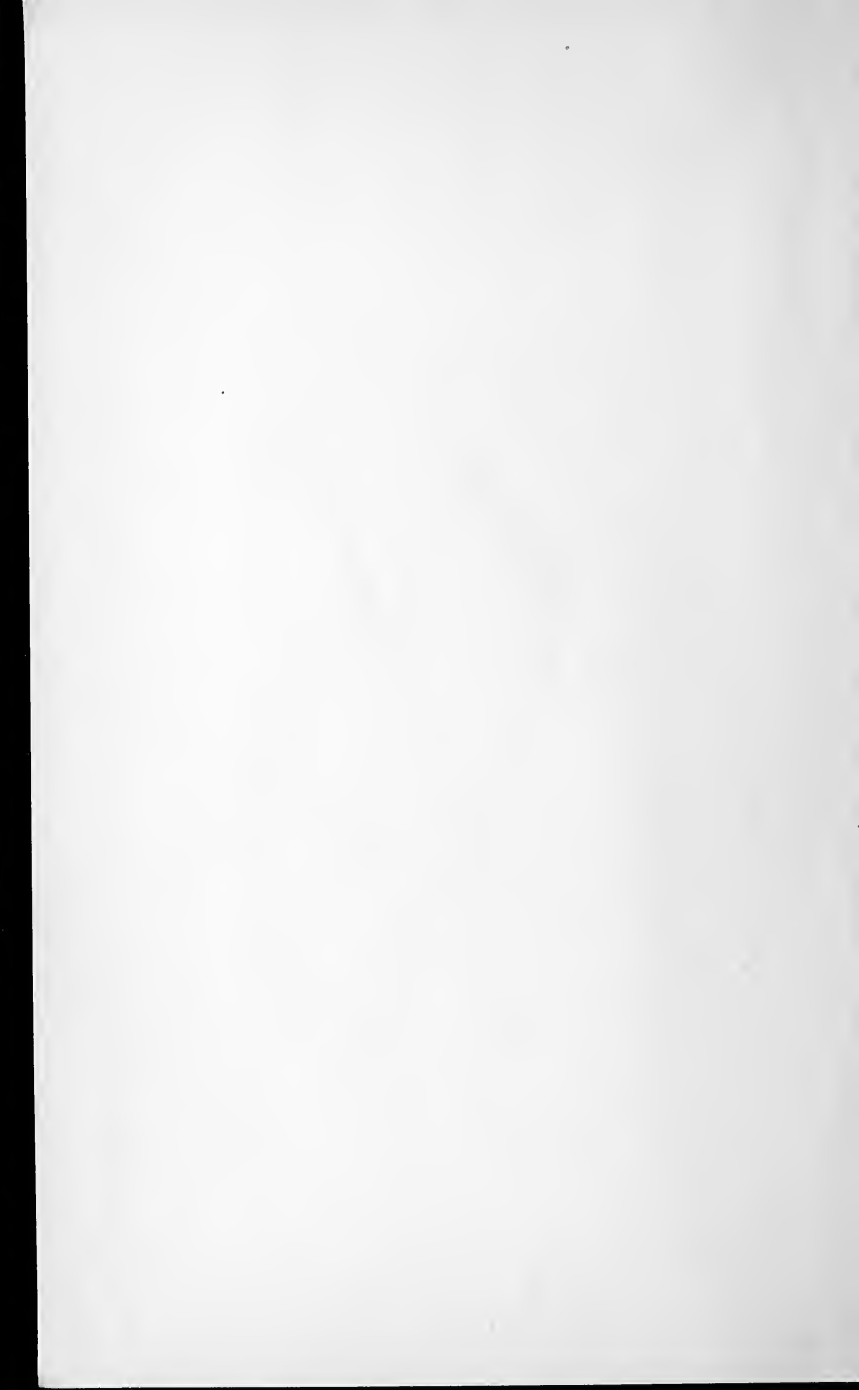


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# SOLILOQUIES OF A HERMIT

BY  
THEODORE FRANCIS POWYS



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## SOLILOQUIES OF A HERMIT

*“He that acknowledgeth the Son, hath  
the Father also.”*

AM I a fool? Is not a fool the best title for a good priest? And I am a good priest. Though not of the Church, I am of the Church. Though not of the faith, I am of the faith. Though not of the fold, I am of the fold; a priest in the cloud of God, beside the Altar of Stone. Near beside me is a flock of real sheep; above me a cloud of misty white embraces the noonday light of the Altar. I am without a belief;—a belief is too easy a road to God.

A priest has his roots in the deep

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## SOLILOQUIES

darkness of human desires ; his place is beside the Altar, held to the earth by twisted roots ; the priest gives to man whom he cannot love, and loves God whom he cannot know. The priest points ever to Christ, and tells the people to love Him ; but to love one another he does not tell them. How can he ? The Master alone can command the impossible ; Christ, who knows only Himself, He can say, "Love one another." The priest can only say, "Love Christ." He knows that the people can never love one another, and that if they could love one another, there would be no need for them to love Christ.

And I, the priest, will tell the story. I know how men move under the shadow of the moods of God, and I know how I move. Some try to hide in the Garden, and some try to hide in the beast's belly. I have tried to hide amongst grassy hills ; but the moods of God have

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hunted me out. The proper place for a priest is in a cave, a narrow cave where he lies with his back against a sharp rock. As I could not hide from God, I tried to hide from myself, and watch the moods as they passed by. To believe in God and not to believe in yourself, is the first duty of a priest. There is no need to fulfil a mood ; you get far more of the truth of a mood if you do not fulfil it, and a mood is often good and kindly to you if you let it enter without your doing anything that it moves you to do. A priest is always a priest, on a throne ; or if upon the gallows, he is still a priest. A priest is a man who knows the workings of the moods of God.

The common man, the happy man, the working man, the immortal man, is dominated by one mood, so that he never feels God but in one way, and whatever condition he may be in, this

## SOLILOQUIES

one mood holds him up. This kind of man is everywhere ; he is the people ; he talks about "having a drink," "getting on in the world," "writing books," "buying stocks and shares," "driving pigs to market," "sowing red wheat." He may be in a palace, or at the bottom of a coal mine, or in a clover field, or in a villa at Chiswick ; he is the people, and his dominating mood is the getting mood.

On the other side of the road is the priest. He is vulnerable, he is mortal ; this life is his only life, he is not immortal like the other man ; the only immortality that he gets is by believing that he is immortal ; his children are not his children, and his life is not his life, it is God's. He is the soil in which God practises His divine moods ; His hating moods, His loving moods, His cruel moods. The other man is dominated by one mood all his life ; the manner of his life never changes, he

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moves in one small circle. The priest is never under one mood for long ; he is always breaking, or rather being broken, by God. God takes him up and casts him down, and pitches him from one mood into another, taking care that no mood lasts that the priest can live and feed upon. The priest prays ; he tames the moods by prayer, and he tries to shut up the bad moods, the good moods, all the moods, in the Bible ; and then he tries to hide the Bible in the Church. And he prays all through the bad moods, even when they bite him (and moods can bite), and he waits and prays till a gentle mood comes like a dove from heaven ; then he rejoices and quietly eats his bread like any other man.

I am writing about myself. I am the priest that I talk about. When I speak about the priest or anything about the priest, I mean myself. I was never put into the fold, and I never climbed over

## SOLILOQUIES

the wall ; I never knew Latin ; I have never spoken to a Bishop, or helped a Dean to put on his gaiters ; I have never tried to convert any young lady in the street. I am speaking of Religion in a book ;—that is not allowed, but what else can I write about ? It is the only subject I know anything about.

At the same time there are things that interest me, and things that I love. I love a broken chair that is worn through to the wood ; it is a chair that can tell its own tale ; I have a terror of anything that is sound and whole. I love a broken roller left in a field ; my little boys come with me up a little hill and play by it ; it is left in a field that belongs to a crippled farmer, a weakly tottering old man, crooked and bent ; all his farm tools are broken and tied up with string, and the roller is the most broken, and that is why we love it the best. It is much better, I have found, to love a chair than to love a

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person ; there is often more of God in a chair, and God often rests by the side of the old roller and watches my little boys play and the old farmer at plough.

The moods pass over me and I must act after their ruling. I hate when they hate, I love when they love. The wonderful moods carry me on, and do with me what they will. When an evil day comes, it is the mood from above that is evil ; when the earth and sky and my heart are bathed in sunbeams, God is in a shining mood above. The moods carry me away in the night and they leap upon me in the day, and they hold me down in the evening, or perhaps let me wander a little way under the stars.

I have voted twice at the elections, once for a conservative and once for a liberal ; at each election I voted according to the mood that I was in, as

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everyone ought to. Just now I wear a badge of an order of Socialism, and when one day I broke my spade in trying to lift up a dead cherry-tree in the garden, I looked at my badge and wondered what it meant by having an arrow, the sun and the world upon it. And then I thought of the people ; I know a little about the people, the people that slave and toil and tear at each other with the claws of the beast, and the beast has sharp claws. I know their ways and how they steal the moods of God ; they will not allow the moods of God to pass freely through them and go.

Once I said, "I love poor men." And I believed that they were true, noble, simple, and kind, and of all men, I loved most the men in the fields ; I thought that the gentle life they led in the country gave their minds the colour of deep grey waters. I thought that poor people dwelt so near the mud that



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they were always clean ; I thought that only spoilt children were cruel and ugly, and that all the poetry of the world came from the cottage.

It is the priest's duty to dig in the clay through which the moods of God pass ; he must foretell how the clay pieces will behave when the mystic winds that they cannot see blow them. It is well that he preaches of one that will take away the sins of the world ; but if that One would take the goodness of the world, too, he would find the load almost as hard to bear ; for the good man often hides beneath his goodness an ugly little devil that spits out fire.

Man is a collection of atoms through which pass the moods of God—a terrible clay picture, tragic, frail, drunken, but always deep rooted in the earth, always with claws holding on to his life while the moods pass over him

## SOLILOQUIES

and change his face and his life every moment. The people of the earth are clay pieces that the moods of God kindle into life.

To the priest every man is a rough soil that the moods of God pass through, and the priest knows that every man will clutch what he can hold like a babe, and he knows that where the moods of God are, strange things will happen. He knows that the world is a wild mad world, a world that cannot settle into peace, that cannot quietly tend its garden and plant the herbs of the field. In the moods, in my moods, there are great and terrible happenings. In the most quiet places the moods of God rend and tear the heart. Every mood that passes through me is terrible, the most peaceful happy mood carries the heartache beneath it.

In looking at my life, as indeed in looking at anyone's life, I see the desire to do something so that the moods may

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pass and the man still live. And I think that I can also understand the idea of the monk in a cell, or the hermit in a wood, for these allow the moods freely to pass through them, in order that they may catch God in His own thought. In the common longing to do something—I will not say to work, I see the desire to escape from God. When I want to go out and work or even to help my neighbour, my reason is that I want to hide myself from the moods. I have never been idle—no priest ever is ; my sin has been that I have sought to do something ; not that I have worked—of course there comes to the hand of everyone something of the common burden—but when I have sought work, it has been as a means of escape, of escape from the moods of God. There is only one way of escape and that is in prayer. I will call it the monk's way ; only the monk's way is no use to him from

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whom God hides deep down at the bottom of His moods.

All human laws are made to trap and snare God's movements ; men are always trying to get at ease with themselves and away from His terrible ways. The priest learns the hard law of men, and he feels the terrible presence of God ; from men he is given poverty and scorn, and from God, death. He forgives men, and he takes God's gift, that is to him God's best gift ; he trains himself to become as clay in the hand of the potter ; to take the mood and the day and the chance as it opens out to him ; to walk the road that is nearest before him and to keep always to the left-hand side of the way ; to accept as they choose to come, the anger, the fretfulness, the joy, the hunger ; for each is a sign, if it be not the reality, of the moods of God. I have learned to know that though I cannot touch

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the power, the power can touch me ; that is as far as I dare probe into the mystery. I am not evil nor good ; I am just my own clay through which the moods of God pass, and this is exactly the case with my brothers, and with everyone else ; no one is good or evil, we are all just our own clay.

When I look at myself before a glass I am not pleased ; I fear I cannot look into the glass and say to myself, " What a fine fellow ! " I wish I could. All the same I am willing to put up with myself ; I am not yet tired of the sun ; I like still to feel the movement of being, and to know that another spring has come ; I love myself enough to love the world.

I have discovered that all movement is a begetting and creating, and that when I only move my feet I bring to birth new wonders. We cannot over-

## SOLILOQUIES

rate too much mere existence. Simply to be set dancing by the sun is something. I love to preach, but the only person I ever preach to is myself, because I am the only person that I have ever met who knows how to attend to a sermon. I preach to myself, and I am interested to get to the bottom of my sins. I find my sins are deep enough to be interesting. I love to hate, to desire, to envy, to bear malice in my heart. I am glad that I have these feelings; I do not want to love my neighbour. I prefer mildly to hate him. When the mood of gentle tolerance comes to me I take it and love even God.

I have not fallen into my worst sin. My greatest temptation has always been to work, to go with other men into the great labour market of the world, and be given my place. The priest is lower than the lowest labourer, and if

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he can only find men and no God in the earth, woe be to him, he will certainly find himself betrayed.

Once I thought I was wise, wiser than the wise men of old. "It was not for me," I said, "to come out from the same door wherein I went." It is well to break your head against all the walls that you can, while you are young, so that when you grow old you can slay yourself quietly in your own garden.

I wonder what to most men is the pleasantest thing they do. I know that I am happiest when I am mending my garden railings ; they are very old and very much out of repair ; every labourer that has come past for the last ten years has had something rude to say about them ; and if they see me in the garden they stop and advise me to have iron railings ; and once a young sheep dealer told me I ought to build a wall. But,

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alas, I am no lover of walls that keep out the sunshine, and I have a vast hatred for iron railings, and why should I not continue my happiness by mending my wooden ones with string? But people do not like my way. And if the Parish Council had the power, it would no doubt compel me either to sell my cottage or to buy iron railings. If no one drank any beer, if all were self-respecting, if all wore badges with a "world and an arrow," if everyone went to Chapel, then would they force me to mend my railings with iron nails and barbed wire.

If George v. were not king, if the people ruled, if these lovers of iron railings and brick walls had the power, there would be no life for me or any lover of string upon the earth. I wonder whether if in America a disciple of the god Pan is allowed to mend his garden railings with string, or is he badgered to use nails? One day it will



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happen that everyone will be forced to live exactly as his dullest neighbour wishes him to, and we shall be compelled to eat meat every day and to earn the money to pay for it. An iron-hearted world it is indeed, and in some places even the daisies are made of nail heads, so new that they shine quite like real daisies. I pray that I may always be allowed to keep my blood cool by watching the cows and by moving brown earth under the sun. Must everyone here on earth be either ordering or obeying, stealing or giving, blessing or cursing ?

The kind of people that I find most unpleasant to my taste, are the people that look and smile and walk on. These are they that find fault,—the fault-finders, the people that point at your thistles and count your nettles, that wonder why you do not keep fowls, or why you keep a row of five broken

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buckets by your back door. These are the people who think that to work is to worship, and who talk about nothing else than what they can do, and what you cannot do. I lack their ardour ; they say they keep the world growing, but it is more likely that they keep the world sinning.

It is now spring, with a dull mist and rain coming over the hills, and a wind that howls like December in the chimney, and in the spring what memories come to us who look backward ; to us who prefer not to look forward. The memories of spring,—that every spring revives, and every autumn kills, and every winter buries ! I know the joy of looking backward,—and the tears,—in order to find again the sun that once shone ; and when found I can take and eat the true joy now that I was not able to take then. I can now pick up the wind flowers that I missed by being too

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eager for them. Only the same kind of day must come in order that I may be able to remember the past, and I must have the same kind of feelings that I had on that same day ; the same old crippled man must hobble past ; the same wind must howl in the chimney ; the same white cow must chew the cud by my gate ; and then I remember. And often it is something ugly that brings me to this happiness. I have never had the least objection to ugly things. If my fire warms me, what do I care if the grate is a square black hole in the wall, with three varnished iron sunflowers in a row above it ?

I like things beautiful to keep at a distance, and even art can very well keep shut up in a book. It is a worry to me to have too precious works near by. I can look at good things too much ; it is better to have a certain cheapness of ordinary and common

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things about, that one need never look at.

No labour has made the delicate visions that come to me from the past, and require only the same kind of day to awaken ; no hard chisel formed the look of affection that I saw once in the eyes of a sick man ; no brush can show me the first celandine lying in the dust of the road, thrown down by a tiny child, though a brush may be able to show me one, smiling gaily, almost too gaily, from a bank of canvas. Ah, but to him that painted the picture these are memories ; all the money in the world cannot buy them.

I have found a use for every one of the moods that pass through me. There is one of depression that is common to all men, and I compel this mood to carry me down to the earth and even below the earth, so that it may give me peace. When I speak of God, I mean

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the mystic fear that I share in common with all men, who do not give their lives utterly up into the claws of Mammon.

When I began to write this—shall I say tract?—I spoke of myself as a priest without a God; but it is quite impossible to be a priest at all without the mystic fear showing itself somewhere, showing itself perhaps in the way I walk down the road, or put on my overcoat, shall I say? The fear of God, calm, persistent, triumphant, must show itself to the priest at last. It is impossible to ignore it; it is in life, it has to open a way for itself although we may try to bar it out. “I went down into Hell and behold he was there.” It is futile to try to go gaily along for ever and chat and smoke cigarettes, and talk about the pleasure of the spring, or about a young lady who lives on the other side of the valley and is no better

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than she should be. The fear of God is sure to break in upon you ; the very winds bring it ; it comes out of the stones ; I dig it up in the garden ; I hear it in the sound of a train far off ; there is fear in the sound of a train. I see it moving in the flight of a bird ; I cannot escape it. No one can save himself from the Fear by work ; you must stop somewhere, and the Fear can wait for you outside the door,—he has plenty of time. I have always lived near great empty spaces, great empty fields and huge solitary downs ; often I walk miles without meeting anyone, and the moods that come to me are often as empty and void as the hills around ; and the very emptiness is dreadful. No wonder that honest labourers crowd to the taverns ; no wonder the priest likes to have his church full of human flesh and blood rather than to be alone with the fear of God.

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I love light. I love to light the lamp on a winter's evening when the sun sets red in a mist behind our low hills, for in the summer the sun climbs up our highest hill. I like to light a fire, and to smell the smoke of burning wood and to feel the first warmth that comes when the sticks burn. I love the sun ; and if I were to worship an Idol, I would certainly worship a star ; and when I dig in the garden I like to turn my face to the sun. For the moon I have no love, except for the child with torn long hair that runs over his face when he is full, and was discovered by one of my brothers ; no doubt she is always fleeing from the horrible old man with the sticks. There lived just such an old man in our village.

I take my life as I find it, and live it to myself as everyone does. As I am a priest, I never give anything away ; it is a natural law of my nature not to give, but always to receive. I once

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asked a tramp why he did not beg of me for anything, and I inquired of him whether I looked a mean fellow, or if I looked as if I had not anything to give away. He said he did not know why he had not asked, but that somehow he knew that I was not the kind of gentleman to beg from ; he also added as he went on, "The woman behind me will ask you," and so she did, but got nothing.

Looking backward, looking forward, looking around me in search of my greatest pleasure next to mending my railings, I can say without lying that I find it in reading a good book. I do not know any good thing that is so good as this. But I must have a book to my mind. I do not object to any kind of story,—to travel, to pig-sticking even ; but it must be something with a soul. If it be a story, let it have a touch of human blood about it ; what I want



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is a real mind's battleground, with sweat and agony. I like an author who has seen—who has lived, what he is writing about ; I hate a book that tells only half the man does and invents the other half : I like the whole man in his work,—his body, his hands and his eyes, and even his belly. And I like best to read of actual moving, working life ; of ships as Conrad writes of them, or anything else that has a real touch of moving, itching, speaking life about it. Let me have the whole body of the man as well as his brain in his book.

A book that I love, and of all books the most intensely human, is Wesley's *Journal*. He is a worshipful priest of his hands, as Malory would have said ; he speaks with the fervour of God and rides with the fervour of the Devil. There are no cobwebs about his sermons even ; he let the winds of heaven into his life, the sly old heathen ! He

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was called, I suppose, as many bad names as any person upon earth or in heaven. But how human he was ; how his human hatred and malice show up the man as a man, and not a pitiful humbug as most of us are ; and he could bring down his fist when he wished to. He was a bad husband, I know it ; but let any young lady with a white fur muff and neat ankles, who wants to marry a John—more John than Wesley—find out a little what manner of man he is, before she trips up to the altar beside him ; and if she is wise, she will turn back and find some sober bank-manager instead, whose name may very well be something else than John. John Bunyan would have called Wesley a cock of the right kind, but a wild cock, a cock that strayed, a cock that would ride without a wink sixty miles before breakfast, “with a driving rain in our faces,” rather than listen to the gentle upbraidings of a

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sober partner at home. And this other John who is the true saint—whereas Wesley is the sinner—this other John had ever that strange quaint love of all weak things ; he might well have been a Russian peasant ; a marvellously loving man he must have been and very tender too to all about him ; it would have been a hellish thing to have cast stones at this man's belief. The thing was life and death to him ; he could not defend it like John Wesley, who knew the little hidden ways of his Lord.

Everyone treated Bunyan with kindness, with tolerance ; there must be some good in man. It is true that they put informers like black rooks into the trees, but they did not run mad bulls at his meetings, or drag his preachers through ponds. I suspect one had to be a brave man to take John Wesley into a corner and tell him quietly in his ear that one did not believe in a God. Some of the young

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gentlemen who broke in drunk to his meetings were sometimes pretty roughly handled.

Wesley's humour is always bubbling over, try as he might to keep it down. And how he loved to make the people fall and rave at his meetings ; and he went about afterwards counting them as though they were so many dead sheep. I would have walked miles to have heard him, and, by heaven, I would have tumbled over, too, if I could have done it. It is no small thing to be taken out of this careworn, weary, everyday life, and behold instead a vision of yourself as a damned sinner with the fire of Hell at your feet, and to roar out, feeling that the very devils had hold of you. And after all this, as they almost always did, to receive the pardon ; to hear the voice from above ; and to sleep in peace with the Grace of God upon your pillows. It was no small thing that Wesley could fill

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thousands of death-beds with immortal longings and a certainty of salvation ; if they were all lies and cheating, they were certainly romantic lies and joyful madness ; and if death can be cheated of its sting, why, then, let us cheat it, if we can ! Wesley could give hope at the last, even if it were a mad hope ; and who of us has not said many times, “ What must I do to be saved ? ” It is one of the most curious feelings that I know, this one of being on the side of God, on the safe side. Sometimes in my life I have been able to go a little towards this feeling, and to know what it is like ; to go just near enough to the door to want to get in, and to be made quite ill-tempered when my old doubts drove me away.

Another book that sometimes pleases me, and I like the sober colour of its binding, is the Bible ; and what a book of blood and tears ! Think of all the human eyes that have read all this very

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strange matter ; think of all the human hearts that have read terror and hope and death into these pages. This human element must make the book at least of interest to everyone. How it has eaten into the heart of man, how it has torn at his vitals and lashed him with his blood. How it utters the moods of God with a great and deep voice, crying, weeping, hating, and ending up in utter madness. The divine fear flows in great waves through its pages, drowning many that meet it there, and even a child sees something terrible about this book. It tells of men walking in dreams in the garden of God, singing and praying and telling Eastern tales under the moods of God. And how well it keeps to the earth and the things of the earth, the poetry of the belly of life. We can see the dark men wandering under the sun of the desert, walking in the cool of the evening, throwing a spear and shooting

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with an arrow. It shows you a man breaking a hole in his own wall, as a sign from God ;—what a mood to be in ! Another eating honey out of the bones of a lion ; and at the end man comes to Christ, the human child, the child of the moods of God ; and then the Agony in the Garden.

We all read our own life in this book, our beginning and our end. The world is a garden to us all at first, and thorns and nettles come only too quickly ; but we may find a good poet among the nettles, and perhaps a Ruth. Or it may be our destiny under some mood or other to marry a harlot, and when, as no doubt the Prophet did, we make her an honest woman, she will have plenty of time to preach to us of our own failings.

It was not easy for man to bear the heavy weight of the moods without Christ, and He is welcomed by all the

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weak ones in the earth, and not without cause, for the end must be the agony in the garden that only very old sinners seem to escape. And how can the play be acted without the last scene? It cannot be complete without the end. If man had been able to sneak into another life the Bible would never have been needed. The moods of Him above are too great and terrible to carry the soul of man with them, when they pass the dark waters. It is well that our end should be perfect and utter, and we know it is well. We poor mortals, —at least the weak ones amongst us, the others don't care,—we poor mortals play with the romance of another life as a babe would with a celluloid toy, and when the fire touches it, in a moment it is gone.

Everything that we do and think under the moods is put into the Bible ; the Bible tells us all we can ever know about ourselves. In our lives



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the Prophets sing wild songs ; Ruth lies down by Boaz ; David steals the cakes ; Mary washes Christ's feet with her hair ; and Samuel hews Agag to pieces before the Lord. All the cruelty, all the terror, all the poetry of the Bible is acted in our lives ; that is why it is the religious book that will live ; it is true, because it is true to life and true to man. We may well sorrow over the sorrows of our Lord, for one day the nails will be driven into our own hands. A little pain that we feel in our bodies may be the beginning of a fatal disease ; a thought that anchors in our minds may be the prelude to a fierce madness. We pass our days as gaily as we can, but the Bible is always near, and try how we may to escape, God will win. The book of our tragedy is in our doors, open it and know what we are and how we shall end.

And our best books follow the same

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plan, and try to show the same sad story with a gay laugh. Shakespeare plays in the field of our follies with a light hand, and like the Bible he would show us our heart's blood held up by a gay fool in cap and bells; only in Shakespeare, there is a great deal more of the love of the Devil than of the fear of God. Shakespeare took away the clouds of God and put the sunshine of his own head and pointed beard in their place. As a matter of fact all books tell the same tale, and advise men to look into all kinds of holes and corners for honey to make their lives sweet.

If ever I wrote a book I would like to show that the continued touch of life gives us a joy that we may well try to understand, and in books this touch of life is what pleases me most. There is something in the spirit of these modern days that makes me feel that I am wasting time when I am reading,

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and that "something" must be the iron-eyed, restless, nail-making devil that tries to put petrol into every man's belly, and would turn the world into a scurvy heap of scurrying ants, all running every way inside large white eggs that move themselves, a great many times bigger than the little ants. And even I that live in the wilderness, sitting in my own hut between the hills that are now covered with yellow gorse flowers,—even I, with brown bread and tea upon the table, and my feet to the fire,—even I, sitting thus in the desert, feel the devil tugging at my coat and shouting in my ear that I ought to be doing something in order to help the nail-makers to iron over the whole world. It is terrible to think that the evil smell of modern oil has got to me, and that the vile working devils would even try to pump petrol into my soul. In heaven's name let those that make work into a god with

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a Brummagem name, take him out of my way ; I do not like that kind of god.

Do not think, O reader, that I mean to revile the kind of work that I see pass my garden. I see an old cart trundling along filled with turnips, going about a mile an hour ; I see a rabbit-catcher half hidden in a rabbit hole, quietly wondering where to set his next snare, and turning at last his slow steps to the inn to exchange a rabbit for beer. No, it is the work that bites you that I hate—work with a foreman biting behind ; not the work of a ploughboy who has plenty of time to think of his dinner and to sing a song ; but the work that has no song in it at all, the work that is sheer, bare, vile toil.

And let us all bless religion, for it can, like a pleasant timely illness, take men away from their cursed everlasting

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toil. Where work is the most, religion is the least thing in the land. And religion, so the task-masters say, might very well do more harm than the drink, if it takes the line of least resistance. In their heart of hearts the task-masters fear the priest; that is why they try so hard and succeed so well in making a false priest; they do not mind the Lord God, but they do not like the Son of Man. I wonder if we shall ever understand that the world is not made for work but for Joy. And I who am trying to understand, why should not I be left in peace to eat and walk amongst the clean rain-swept hills and to try to get under the moods of God?

Come and take and eat this morning with me, a bowl of porridge with salt, bread crisped by the fire, tea, the virgin herb of the sun, and brown sugar, the sweetness of our Mother's breast. Shall we go out and slay a lamb of the

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flock if we have a mind to a feast? Why should we not cut a throat or stick a pig, and cook it over a great fire? But I prefer parched corn; I prefer to grow some genial honest sea-cabbage in my garden, or to transform some ugly worn bits of copper into shining white eggs. It is well to leave too many dinners alone, and too big feasts; for if we eat a great many very large dinners, the dinners will most likely end by eating us.

All praise be to Wine, but should not wine be kept for those selected moments when we meet the ones that we love, the children of our hearts? I do not like always to see wine on the table; it is often stale, and the decanter not overfull; and there are often dregs that the unwary guest has to finish; and worst of all the host wonders if there will be just enough. Throw such dregs to the pigs. When

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I take wine I like bottles, or better still a goodly hooped barrel in the cellar and the wine drawn in fantastic jugs. I like there to be around the table three or four companions, but no more than the number of the bottles, and no women. And there ought to be a ritual, a crowning of the cups; cups of silver and gold; a feast of wine is quite worth the trouble of reading the writing upon the wall.

Sometimes, but alas only too seldom, comes to me out of the heavenly presence the mood of loving Tolerance, that most gentle of the moods of God. It is then that I regard the world as a garden and the people as good children; it is the mood in which everyone is forgiven; it is the mood that makes me say to myself, "It is good for me to be here," and to say to other people, "It is good for you to be near me." It is a mood that would pick out of

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every man's life pearls, and see joy in every hardship. It is a mood that whispers joy to the sick man and tells him of the wonderful stillness of death. This mood is full of summer blessedness, of cool places amidst great and fair trees ; of rich banks of summer flowers ; of the noontide when the labourer lays him down to rest. Under this blessed mood the winds of heaven are still, and the mind of man is filled with peace, that is truly and really the Peace of God. Alas, this mood stays with me but a short time.

I want to manage myself as well as I can, but it is not easy to manage myself when I am tired ; when I am tired I can do nothing else but walk up and down. At those times I am a great trouble, a great worry to myself ; I do not obey the rules that I have set up to guide me ; I do not even obey myself. If I say, "Go out for a walk



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in the rain," I do not go. If I order myself to write letters, I do not write them. It is no good. This kind of "being tired" is a mood of despair, and when despair gets hold of you there is no escape till the ugly thing lets go.

Perhaps it is possible for some to get good even out of this mood, for God hides His gold in queer places; despair may be a kind of winter in the summer of your day. The sap has sunk like lead into your heels and you feel as though you could howl like a winter's wolf. This hopeless despair, by bringing you to the earth, raises you again; it changes your blood, and drives you with vicious kicks forward into a new pasture. It makes a way for you out of your own misery, and creates a new mind out of your unrest: that—with a new beginning. But I can never escape, I can only wait until the mood lets go, and meanwhile the teeth of the mood bite me to the bone, and the

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black cruelty cuts at the very roots of my being ; and when it has hold of me I can do nothing ; I cannot even read *The City of Dreadful Night*. When I am like that I know there is nothing to be done—nothing. When I am like that I feel as if mind and body are hemmed in by black darkness, and that if I move I shall touch the jagged edges of a rusty knife, held in the claws of an ugly round-headed demon ; and so I wait and hope that this mood of God will not last long.

When we were all of us quite natural beasts of the earth, we were able to take and enjoy the life near to us ; but being grown into men, we have got into the bad habit of looking forward, and by looking forward we quite lose the present. I want to take every moment as a fact in itself of special interest, and as a moment that belongs to me. Every moment that I have to spend

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does belong to me, and the moments may be gold or dross as I choose to make them. Why should I let a moment pass me without taking it and finding a fairy food for my thought? I like to have a plan to fit the kind of day that I expect to come; I like to know a little how I want to treat the day, before I find out how the day will treat me. So that if I am bitten by one hour, I have got a muzzle ready for the next. And I like to remind myself very often that the day ends in sleep, and that sleep is a passing good thing for a man. To me by no means seldom comes the thought (that is, in truth, only the push of the old animal behind), that the day is wasted—I have done nothing; and a good thing too if I have done nothing—the most pleasant and the most useful way that anyone can spend a day is to do nothing.

May my pride help me, poor foolish

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mortal that I am, with my insane desire to do things ! Has not all this same sad day the breath of life passed into my lungs—is it then nothing to breathe ? And I have eaten and touched the fruits of the earth. How do I know that some God may not have rested beside me during my idleness, and His breath may have mingled with my breath, and His thought with my thought ? How can I tell that even in this sad day of nothing done, a wave of thought, beginning in a tiny ripple, may not have been conceived in me ? And, besides, what man, what king, what priest can do anything more than live ? It has taken long enough to make a man, and now a man sits in disgrace and hates himself because in one day he has done nothing. What after all are the very wonderful doings of man worth ? Very likely by doing nothing we may be going a little way on the right road, and by doing a great deal we may only

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be going round the same old way again, the same old way that leads to common ugly rows of houses, municipal buildings, and petrol-filled machines.

I, too, for a long while, have looked round this corner and that corner for God's secret, and at last I have discovered that I can do very well if I loiter through my life without knowing any secret at all ; and who can say that there is any secret to know ? It is quite clear, and quite proven, that men breathe when they are born and not when they die ; and there are other matters quite as clear to me. It is my wish to be an intelligent creature that has no desire to get more than just the plain grass and sun that are quite easy to get, and to wrap myself up in winter in a woollen blanket. The excitement of going out to pick up a few sticks is all the hunting that I want ; and all the gallantry that I want is sometimes to see in summer a little piece of pink

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or white on the side of a hill a mile or two away. I am easy to please and I never want to do anything that hurts anyone ;—why should I ? I should not like to see the blood of my neighbour if I dug at him with a knife. And why should I want to hurt anyone when I can enjoy reading *Tristram Shandy* ? The uttermost I can do is to try my best to hate. But I do not like to hate anyone that is too near ; there ought to be a good wide space between a man and his neighbour.

It is my business to find out what I value in the world, and by no means to pay any regard to what other people value. Christian—Bunyan's pilgrim—all of a sudden, while he was walking in the fields, became aware that he was of value ; and it was then that he became for the first time in his life a really proud man, and a man who could walk his own way whatever Church and

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State and family chose to say to him. I only require to believe in myself, and then everything that I do will be well done. No two people look even at the same daisies in the same way, and my way is the best way for me. I have the moments of my life to spend, I have myself, what more can I want ?

In the old days I used to tie myself up in a mystic knot, that I never could undo ; neither could I ever explain what it meant. Now I leave all mystery to come and go with the moods. If a mood comes and therein is hidden a vision, I welcome it and believe ; for there is a mood in which God even believes in Himself, and in that mood He begets the belief of the world. And I am willing to believe, too, when it comes to me. I take and eat of the mystic fruit ; only when the fruit is taken away I do not pretend that I have it still. How often has my body been the home of carking care, and vile, dire forebodings, or silly

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ignorance, or turbid folly ! And I have had to live a long time before I was able to open my eyes and see myself.

To have the soul and teeth of a lion and the body of a tramp, is the way to tread on this world as it ought to be trodden on. I know that I am an enemy to the people of the world as they are. I do not like the way they look at me. Why is it that when I am doing my work, the people of the world look at me as though I were doing something wrong ? "There he is again, digging in his garden."

I suppose that I am the kind of person that whatever I do is a criminal offence. I must not even water my flowers, or walk down the road, or throw a stone at a rat, or read the paper in a corner under a little bush of May. No one ever likes to be understood ; perhaps that is why there is a jeering twinkle in the eyes of those that look



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at me as I cut my grass. Perhaps the people think that I understand them. If they do think so, they are certainly to be excused for the way they look at me, but they are wrong. I do not pretend to understand them, for to understand the people would be to understand God, at least to understand what God ought never to be.

To give too good heed to God's moods often gets a man shut up inside prison walls. That is why it is well to understand one's own mind, so that when we find a mood pulls us along a road to destruction, we can hold back a little before it is too late. I have never found that God plays at His moods. If He does jest at all, it is a very monstrous jest, and the sort of jest that does not appeal to me personally, though I like to read about it in the papers.

I very much dislike people who are

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always the same ; for no man can be always the same unless he is so much of an animal that the moods pass over him like the clouds.

I notice in this tract that I am now writing, that sometimes I appear to be an infidel and sometimes a believer, sometimes a Christian and sometimes a heathen, and every brave man is just the same as I am ; for no one but a coward hides his head in the sand when the mood that he is afraid to see goes by. If a man is sincere he will change his opinion with every mood, at least about the things that belong to the spirit. I do not change my ideas in some things, because God is a spirit, and though in the earth we have the Son of God to live with, God Himself keeps always in the spirit of His moods. I change my mind most in what I believe ; but as a rule I do the same thing. I am always polite

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to the world, and I try not to tell anyone when God's moods break in upon me ; or when a tongue of fire suddenly devours all the thought that I love best ; this is what I expect to happen.

But it is a little hard when God's moods shatter my belief in Him, though no mood of God can take away the love of Christ ; for that kind of love that Christ first planted is the only flower that can live under all the moods ; and so it is possible, nay desirable, for the greatest infidel upon earth to love Christ ; for in some curious way the Son of Man is in Earth and in Heaven, though this double life is rather obscure. However, His love has been felt by men even under the Garment of God, and in the darkest terrors of His moods ; and also I have felt it while I have been quite quietly picking buttercups with my two little boys in the fields.

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All priests ought to be trained as unbelievers, for unbelief is the only good soil for the believing mood to grow in ; so long as unbelief is not fixed to that foolish idea that we are all so proud of, the idea, I mean, that we know the Truth. How, I should like to know, can I know the Truth when God Himself is always contradicting it? If I say anything is true, then a mood comes and casts the thing called Truth to the winds, and my idea of God goes with it. If I say I believe only in matter, I have to be always proving it to myself in order to keep out the belief in God.

That is why so many people are arguing whether one belief or another is true ; because each knows that if he does not keep it up, his side of the question will slip through his fingers. And a man is most unhappy when he has always to be fighting the mood of belief or unbelief, in order to keep the

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one or the other simply because he happens to think that one or other of the ideas belongs to him ; it doesn't. Like all other ideas, it belongs to God. It is just man's conceit. He stands like a cock upon a dunghill and crows out his belief ; or else he holds his watch in his hand and says, " Let God strike me dead, if he is a God, in ten minutes." And perhaps the next day this very man believes in God, for the mood of belief is upon him before he takes out his watch again to prove the contrary, and then he has to do all he can to pretend to himself that he does not believe.

It is not for me to say how long the different moods are wont to stay ; everyone in this matter must judge for himself. And it is no use crying out against the mood that hurts you ; it is better to go and dig in the garden.

I can see, and so can any other who

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can think for himself, how good a thing it is that God lives in us in no fixed mood. If He did, it would render the Advent of Christ an impossibility. And how cruelly Christ was treated by the men who had fixed the moods by their law shows that if man could keep God out of his life, he would gladly do it ; just as he would like to keep out death, war, plague, earthquake, love, wisdom, pity, or any other state that hurts his appetite, and prevents him from gathering together the things of this world, and from leaving them to his children.

And it is easy to see how man, with his instinctive cunning, caught at the fixed belief in a distant God as something tangible that would get this *near* God and His upsetting moods quite out of his life. Man thought—foolish fellow—that if he always held on to the tail of the bull it would not gore him, but this bull has not got a tail.

## OF A HERMIT

I am ashamed at the way we eat and drink and sleep as if none of these things concern us in the least. We take our dinner just as if it were no great matter, when every sitting down to meat should be a feast to the Lord. We cast our bread into the dust to the dogs, when we ought to hand it to them in silver dishes. Everything that we eat should be sacred to our palates. I like to make a wonder out of every little act, because every little act is a wonder.

The simple life—so called—is not the simple life at all ; it is the deeper life. The simple life is the life of motor cars, of divorces, of monkey dances, of hunting cats and hares and foxes, of shooting people and playing games like ferrets. All these things are the natural, the simple life of a man. Anyone can get pleasure in these ways ; put a man on a horse, and

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a fox or a cat before him running away, and the man will be simple and happy. And the other pleasures are just as simple.

The best joy is not got quite so easily. I want to cultivate the kind of mind that can turn stones into bread, a dull hour into heavenly glory, and a dull life into the life of a king. For what we call dullness is really the best soil we can dig in, because the gold that it yields is very precious and very lasting. I like to know that I am getting rich, not by stealing from the poor, but by getting something more out of myself; I want to get all I can out of myself, and what I want to get is the thing that shall please me.

The fact that it is hard to get anything out of oneself drives people to go and get what they can out of others. I do not blame them. I never blame anybody; I never even blame myself. The light of my lamp gives light to the



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moods of God that overshadow me as I write ; the air surrounds the moods when it surrounds me ; and the moods rest in me when I sleep. I try to deepen, to broaden, to open my life in every way ; to stand no more wondering how to be happy, but to see and feel and touch. I like to touch the waves of the sea and the mould in my garden ; I like to touch the heart of man ; I like to touch the grass and moss of the fields.

It is only when I meet men that I am ashamed, and it is when I am ashamed that my love bites me, and I feel pain as though I had been bitten by an adder. Sometimes when I walk along the street of our little town and men pass me, and I see them talking to each other, I feel ashamed. There is something very ugly about the immortal part of a man,—his greed, his getting on, his self-sacrifice, his giving to the poor. I suppose there can be

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nothing beautiful in anything that has gone on a long while without changing ; it is only the ugly part of us that can live through so many generations of flesh and blood. I long for man to repent and to be saved from his immortality, so that I may not feel ashamed when I get into the road to let him pass on the pavement.

At last, thank goodness, I have not the slightest value for my own opinion or for anything that I may say, or think, or write. I now take it for granted that I am nearly always as far from the Truth as Mr. Gladstone was, and I do not care if I am. I am not here to do right or wrong, or to teach anyone ; I am here to live. And at last I have found out where the pleasure of living hides ; I know now the moments that I have most enjoyed, and these moments may come again ; there is not one that may not come again, even in old age.

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Youth is silly and selfish ; it is often miserable and foolish ; its good looks are stuffed with foolish feelings that are often as old as the world ; and its mind is narrow, — it is always thinking a thousand things too many about itself, when one thing would do. Youth has too many irons in the fire to be able really to live. It is best to have before you only two roads, This or That, this life as it is, or nothingness.

I will try to remember a few of the fairy hours that I have enjoyed most. I remember one evening in late autumn, when I walked with two very dear companions into the shining lights of a town, out of the dark country lanes. The first lamp that we passed might have been an immortal star. The first street, the first moving creature, an old woman carrying a bundle of gloves in a black cloth bag,—no sinner entering heaven could have had so much joy.

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The streets grew broader and the lamps brighter and the passers-by more gay, and the whole town was a fairy palace made for our delight, and we had only to walk about and enjoy it.

And I remember under a white cliff, where the sand was too hot to touch and the sun's kiss kissed deep into my soul. With a dear friend I partook of a little bread and a tiny hard piece of cheese and a little bottle of lime-juice, and we parted it between us, and broke the bread with a priest's hands, and ate and drank as though we shared only one child's heart between us ; and afterwards we each smoked a cigarette that tasted of cool woods.

And one other walk, that I hope in my last hour to remember ; it was in a cold February, and we walked far over the downs, over the white dead grass, dry and crisp in the wind ; and we rested a little and ate in a place where a little mound rose above the hill.

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And we watched, in the valley beneath us, tiny children running to school beside a little blue trickle of water, and large gulls were washing and flapping their wings in the water. The children called to them and waved their arms, and the gulls rose and spread like snowflakes over the valley, and the children ran on, holding each other's hands and singing.

The cup I wish to drink is the cup of the earth's blood. I wish to drink deep of the silence, the deep mists, the growing corn, and the movements of birds. The very life that I feel around me should drug me, and each motion and movement and tongue of fire that I feel ought to pass like rich wine into my being. The very stones of the road should yield up to me their thoughts. And no doubt that was what Christ meant, when He spoke about the stones becoming men. To force upon our

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wonderful bodies the drunkenness of prepared wine is to sour the imagination and to prevent us from ever getting the delicious joy of real drunkenness.

I try to be at peace with all my thoughts and to welcome even my anger when it breaks out upon me. I watch myself as if I were far away, as if I were a cloud passing in the sky, or a distant sheep feeding upon the hillside. I have yet to change a great deal before I can reach the goal of happiness. I still feel that I am in part immortal. I still find a curious pleasure in possessing a handful of bright gold coins. I still desire cunningly to defraud. And often, however much I disbelieve in my opinion, I think I am right. And feeling as I do the very movements of God, I do not like to be treated as a poor man who cannot afford a day labourer to dig his garden.

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I suppose my class, the priest class, craves for love more than any other kind of human, as it feels itself sinking into extinction. I do not possess enough of the attributes of immortality, —greed, hardness of heart, cunning— all the biting instincts of the animal. I have them enough to pain, but not enough to save. I cannot help thinking that the immortal man out of his abundance might give me a kindly look as he passes me in the road, a kindly look out of the body of hatred. This is my last priestly affliction ; I desire to be loved, and loved for nothing. This is my last foolish hope ; I want to be loved by men.

Love is the last sadness of the priest, and men turn away from him because he tries to love them ; for have not the people that immortal hatred that is better than love ?

My wish is that I may understand

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myself. I know quite enough about other people ; they show me their ways only too clearly. I want to appear interesting in my own eyes ; I want to be something of value to myself. I do not want to love. I want to study myself, because I am the nearest and most interesting creature that I know. I would like to be believed in, so that I might have some guide to the belief in myself. Left quite alone, my interest in myself is apt to dwindle.

I like to be contented with myself in every way, and to mistrust everything that is not mine. I am sure that my sour grapes are not so very sour, nor are the sweet grapes of my neighbours so very sweet ; and it is indeed possible that all kinds of grapes have very much the same taste ; the best fruit can only give out so much sweetness and no more.

With the terrible moods of God



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moving about me, as dark clouds, and then the lightning, and sometimes the ominous silence and calm, I turn to the stranger upon earth that once learned to bear the burden of God, calling Him Father, and holding Him, as Atlas held the world, upon His shoulders. I turn to the stranger upon earth, He who was not afraid to call the terrible moods "Father," to take them into His life, to bear with them, to love them. And still more than that, He dared also to become the shepherd of men ; to live Himself as a man and to fall before His Father's terrible mood of blind rage working in men. He alone dared to become one with the spoiler and the spoiled. I bow my head before this stranger of the Earth ; and why should not I too sing a song of belief in Him ?

It is the spring, and the apple-blossom is beautiful because He is there

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in it. To love Him is the only good thing in this world. It does not matter if He is true ; He is beyond all Truth. All things have breath in Him ; I feel Him in the earth. When I hammer at the rocks and break away fossils that have been there for millions of years, I am only going a little way into His love. When I look up in the night and see the light that has left a star thousands of years ago, I can only see a little way into His love. His love is a terrible love—terrible and deep, hard for a man to bear ; I have lived in it, I know it. I hear people say, “ Why did He come here to this little Planet ; why did He not leave it out ? ” I answer, “ He leaves nothing out ; He cannot give anything better than His love ; it is of more worth than immortality.”

A future life is nothing to me ; His love is everything. I study the rocks and the stars ; I love old, very old his-

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tory ; it gives me a breath of Him. I love to know that matter is infinite, for His love is in all matter. A stone that has never been touched by man is touched by Him. The world says it is not possible to believe like this, but I know it is possible. I would never dispute as to whether Christ lived or not ; that does not matter. It does not matter whether we live. Life is wonderful, but we only feel alive when we get near Him, for near Him even Death liveth. He is the life stream of the worlds ; we are all in that stream, only we do not know that we are fed every day by Him.

I know quite well He is the most unreal, the most unthinkable of ideas ; but to feel Him is All ; to believe in Him is nothing. We send His love to the farthestmost star, and He will be formed in that star. When He is near, very near to us, then we feel His terrible love and we kill Him.

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Even now the mood of belief is gone and I turn upon myself and cry out against what I am writing ; I shake all the thoughts of love about my ears, and turn Christ into a worm again. I look out again into the mist ; I sit and watch the dim evening light that saddens the hills ; I see the days pass, the winter days ; and I taste the creatures, the bread and the wine ; and I do not feel His body in them, the bread and the wine ! I feel the emptiness, the unutterable emptiness of all the thoughts in the world ; and I hearken to the remote sounds of the sea. I wonder why we can ever leave the simple clearness of our lives, in order to crawl into the underworld of mystery. I see all things common again and myself the commonest of all. I see the Eternal moods casting men over and over again into the same pit, and I see the Christ, a poor dark Arab, lying beaten by the rods of the Roman soldiers, because the

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wicked sisters of poetry chose him out of all men to teach Truth—Truth that is hateful to men. Christ, like the first swallow, is a promise of summer, but only too well we know that the summer ends, and then comes “the winter of our discontent.”

Who can blame the men who choose to live the simple life of swagger and bluster and shame? For all those who step into other ways know what they see, but they do not often dare to tell it to others. I ought to be glad when I see in every eye the cunning of deceit; “the getting eye,” I might call it, for in the lowest cunning there is the only abiding happiness for man. That kind of life can alone give him joy, under the rule of the moods of God. The lowest creatures alone have happiness, and the children that do not know; and why should we teach them? When I look back at the past, I do not

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regard the moods of God at all ; I do not care whether I have done good or evil ; I do not care whether I cursed or whether I blessed ; I do not care whether I have been good or wise ; or whether I have ever learned Latin ; I do not care whether as a priest I have kicked over my own altar.

This is what I care to remember. I can feel now the warmth of a perfect day in June ; I can see the bugloss on the cliff, growing in little patches of blue below the white chalk. And I remember a night in winter when I saw a white lamb lying quite dead under a clear moon. I see now the rough old black dog, blind of one eye, that used to be asleep on the green in the dog-days that are past ; and its master, a wild old man with a great stride and long beard who was always hammering up pigsties.

I look back and see the common

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things, the human things ; not God's moods, or Christ, or the wonder that is called man's soul. I believe that I have shed more tears over my little boy's broken engine that I dug up one day in the garden, than over all the killing of the Son of Man. I remember how I used to carry a little jug and fetch the milk across the green ; and I see now the daisies that came out altogether one spring day ; and the mild look of the red and white cow that was always milked first and fed upon the green before the others came out. I look back again to the long winters, to the caressing white mists and silvery hoar-frosts ; and afterwards the white May that always came out first on our hedge.

No doubt, I, like everyone else who knows, would gladly rid myself of the deep, fierce, hidden feelings ; of the wild moods of God that tear and baffle us. How I wish that I could bring all

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the dark moods up into the clear air of a high mountain, and prevent them from ever entering into man again ! I long to bring all the hidden thoughts, the gnashing of secret teeth into the sun. God must come out of His heaven, the devil out of his hell, and Christ out of the soul, into the light of the sun.

Let the terrible Gods come down from on high. If they have prepared a future life for us, let us prepare a present life for them. And indeed that is just what Christ the Son of God would have us do. He is willing to live with us in the sun ; let us open our door to Him. I will take Him, and all the rest of the heavenly hosts can go, and He will not refuse to come. All the deep thought and the dread marvels of God can go ; all the hidden fears and these secret terrors can go. With the Son of Man beside me



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I can defy the moods ; and even the old Devil will cast his darts at me in vain.

It is impossible for me, who am only mortal, to keep away from the Son of Man ; He is always ready to come in, and I am not able to shut Him out ; only those who have the immortal cravings for life can do that. He will not allow me to put Him away ; He comes in because it is His right ; He comes in because the heart of man is His home.

It is well that I have reached this silence, this quiet haven that I longed for as a child, and could not find. As a young man walking home in the dusk of the evening, I longed for it then. And as a man, when I struck about me breaking up old thoughts, burning, thrusting, tearing, and at last leaving myself naked, I longed for the silence then. I have feared it ; I thought that to reach it meant death,

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the first step towards death, and I struggled. I have tried to piece the old thoughts together that as a man I had broken. I was like a child, who, thinking that she was too old to play with her doll, had long ago left it at the bottom of the cupboard ; but was forced on a rainy day to find it again, and to tie on its broken arm and find it a new head. I sought for my broken God again ; and put it together as it used to be, before as a man I broke it to pieces.

At last I begin to know myself ; I can now love the wonder that is becoming myself. I live now as I wish to live ; I take every day as it is. I do not try to break the day to pieces as I used to do. The days pass me like hurrying girls on light feet. Years ago I longed to hold them and find out what secrets they had under their cloud and sunshine ; and now I know that it

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is the days that long to find out my secret. They cannot find it out ; they are bound to the wheel, they must dance on and on and make the young men follow them. And they are caught sometimes, these girl days ; they are torn and broken and their evenings are muddy.

In my life there is human life, that is all—human life. If anyone wants more than that, he must go beyond me to find it. The moods hide God as with a garment, but He can find me. And He has found me ; and He speaks His terrible words in the moods of my life. It is no good to try to get out of His way. Everywhere the hand of the Devastator is upon Man, to press him down to the earth.

Only at times under His yoke I have been allowed to take a little nectar from the flowers ; I have hidden my hand in a waterfall of brown hair ; I

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have caught a hurried kiss from a breathing sunbeam. This is all we can have—all. It is impossible to get more out of the world than it can give. It is best to ruminate like a cow.

The world is always rain-swept and sun-cracked, soaked with salt mists and splashed with mud ; and our lives at the best are broken and threadbare, while death ever clings to life, slowly devouring it. That is how we are made ; and always the moods of God fill us with madness, for that is how He is made.

I have always longed to show to myself and to make myself see where true joy is to be found ; and I want to really believe that life can be made a beautiful thing. In the old days when I held my head in the sand of mystery, I thought that something wonderful would happen to me ; and now I believe that the most wonderful thing is

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that nothing wonderful happens. We are, just as we are, and nothing else ; are we not wonderful enough ? By just holding up my hand I am oftentimes filled by a divine vision ; by only hearing the wind howl in the chimney, I am filled with all the harmony of music. By eating bread I am fed with the whole goodness and fullness of the earth. And when the silent mood comes, the calmness of immense seas and eternal spaces fills me.

For a long time I hid my head under the sand, and no wonder I could not understand my own words. I know now that the things of greatest value can be had for the asking. I go into the Palace of the Day, that Christ opened, the Palace of True Joy. How delicately and with what gladness should everyone take part in the great festival ! The centre of life is always near ; it is

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only the outer parts that are afar off and hard to understand.

For a long while I have run after the Chariot, and now I have climbed in. I know now that the smallest handle will do to hold to any part of life, and a million bodies like mine can be formed of one thought. All my little experiences can be easily acted in any part of the earth. We have built up for ourselves such grotesque buildings of thought, so high that when we reach the top we have to fall off to the ground. We are always forming such high destinies for ourselves, that we have quite lost count of the creature of the moods of God, that is ourself.

Whenever a vision has come to me, it has always taken me and shown me the delight of just living,—the joy of things as they are,—of the earth as it is. I have seen only too clearly that my happiness is taken from me because of

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my desire to become something unutterable. How often has my wish been to pretend to be something that I am not, and to leave myself in the shade while I follow my shadow in the sun. I can see in every page of my life that my happiness has been taken away because of my desire to get into another life, rather than to live my own. No doubt one day we shall find all the mystic writers leaving their pens and their burrowings into the unutterable mystery of God's being, and instead busy themselves all day long peacefully planting cabbages.

God himself has been raised up on high, like a stone column that has only its mass to be proud of, and man is always content to knock his foolish head against the base.

I know that we have His moods to create us, and the love of the Son of Man to save us from ourselves, and that is All I know. Everyone is bound

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to set his net in the sea of his life, and to bring home in his net the fish that he deserves or desires, as the case may be ; and he devours them, or what is more likely, they devour him.

I have described myself, and have told of my hopes and aspirations, of my fears and of the way I dig in my garden. But I am afraid I have given quite a wrong idea, because in writing, it is impossible to forget that you are writing. When you are writing there is always the wish to stab the heart of the matter ; you want to get to the exciting part of your thought, the part of your thought that excites you. That is why I have thrown all my stones at one dog and left my hands empty. I would like to think how a friend would write about me, and it must be a friend with a little wit, and not a soul that loves.

The first part of my confessions, tell-



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ing how I touch the earth and sky, and the thoughts of man, are finished ; and I would like to know what I look like from their point of view. The earth loves me, I think I may say that ; the great divine Mother presence tells quite clearly of her love. The hills do not turn away ; they have no other pursuits, other wars, other things to make, so that they must leave me alone. There is something in being able to laugh at a million years, and being able to laugh at the proud overgrown giants in Switzerland—that is what our chalk downs can do. And they can bear me up in their arms for my little while, and not so much as feel that a shadow of life has passed over them. In them the moods of God burn hidden like spent lightning, a dread forsaken fire burning underground.

A few million years gives our hills time to reflect upon the moods, and we

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men need a little of the spirit of their long-suffering, so that God Himself may sink deep for a while, nay, may even be buried in us. And were men ever to act together as one man, which was once dreamed of, then we should present to the gods that calm upper surface, that unperturbed grassy height, and low meadow land, and upland fallow, so that the moods themselves could sink deep into our matter. But alas, our surface is weak and each little man must needs be a bearer of good tidings ; each little man must needs set himself under the hammer, so that he on a very dark night emits a spark, and cries out in the night that he is saved, and in the morning that he is damned.

The hills I love have a noble outward presence like a faithful comrade ; they stay with me even when it rains, and they stay for more than two nights ; I thank them for their silence and their gifts. The flowers have an-

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other way with them ; they are not so friendly. And I fear, it is sad to think of it, that they have learned from their creator how to hate. Ah ! the pleasure to a rose when it can get a thorn into a human finger ; and think of the joy of a red berry when it poisoned little Betsey ; or the merry jests of a bunch of Mary buds that once attracted a little boy into the middle of a swamp, where he was drowned. Flowers can speak almost like women ; I have seen a very angry look in the eyes of a white nettle, because it could not sting me ; and the rage of a musk thistle when I steal its fragrance without being pricked is quite ladylike.

Above the flowers are the beasts, or below them—there is always a little doubt which to say. The beast loves the man that has tamed him ; yes, sometimes. And the gentle creatures, are they gentle ? Will not a dove fight

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in its own way, as fiercely as a lion, for all its pink eyes? Take up a wild live hare and hold it, and see if your hands are not torn by its claws. The moods are beginning to have claws in the beasts; but wait till we get to man. I wonder what these beings, that are made of the same stuff as myself, make of me. I do not think it would be much good to take the opinion of a countryman in this matter. A ploughman critic would indeed speak his mind after his own manner, and that not unworldly, for the earthy wit of the peasant brings the art of the critic to a very lean level indeed, by judging simply by what a man has. I own a cottage, therefore my value to the clown is exactly the value of my cottage, plus the value of my overcoat and the value of my boots. I notice that the passers-by of the fields always look at my boots. Do they expect to see the cloven hoof, I wonder?

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A gentleman came here once for the shooting ; he came from town. I may as well say here that he belonged to the immortal type of man ; and when he was not shooting he attached himself to me, and he found me very ready to listen to his *bons mots*, although they were not quite in the same style as our Saviour's. I will now, for a little while, try to become this immortal young man, who has now gone somewhere else for the shooting. And I will write a little story about myself from the watch-tower of this young man. In so doing I hope to get at the other side of myself, that I could not very well touch in the first part of my confessions.

And now, soul of my soul, child of the moon, I will begin ; I am transformed.

“ Mr. Thomas is the only name that will suit the occupier of the red house

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in the village of ——. Mr. Thomas is so utterly different from his own name, it would be a cap with a wrong colour for him. His name should have come from a simple man who once upon a time, in a fit of sadness, begat a son. I can never think of Mr. Thomas by his real name. If I were to call out 'Powys, Powys,' as I might to my dog, I very much doubt whether I should get any answer. If I were to call him by his real name, this story about him would appear to the public to be quite untrue, for people would say that such a name could not have such a story. That is why I call him Mr. Thomas.

"I would like to say, at the beginning, that this type, the type of Mr. Thomas, is not a type that I approve of. I cannot say that I think that God has expressed His divine purpose very well in this kind of man—a man that does not even know how to treat a

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tradesman, and who will thank a porter for doing what he is paid to do. Mr. Thomas has what I will call a very careworn conscience, a conscience that is quite unable to look after its own interests.

“I am writing about him only ‘as a person that I have met’—for Heaven’s sake understand that, good people. I do not regard him as my friend, because no one could be that, unless he were born under the same star. I used to see him sometimes, that was all, and walk with him a little, and allow him to listen to a few little stories of my own, and perhaps to gently instruct him in the art of living a good life. I may say here that I have no wish to be damned with him; neither do I wish to be caught up in a cloud with him and carried to heaven.

“Mr. Thomas is married, and he digs in his garden. He looks rather like a landscape artist who has spent ten

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summers in trying to draw an old foot-bridge, two willow trees, and a cow, and could never finish his picture because the cow would never lie down. He looks as if he has spent all these years in wondering why the cow would never lie down ; and last of all, his patience being quite exhausted, he packed up his canvas and, after walking slowly home in deep thought, began to dig in his garden.

“The garden that Mr. Thomas cultivated was round about his house ; and his house was in the middle of a grass field ; and anyone going past could see the lines of potatoes when Mr. Thomas planted them. And round the garden were very old railings. I was talking to Mr. Thomas one day, and leaning over the railings, and they fell in pieces. I said I was very sorry ; Mr. Thomas only smiled. And I said, being annoyed, ‘Why can’t you get some good iron railings round your



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garden ?' Mr. Thomas looked at me in extreme sorrow.

"I remember first seeing Mr. Thomas under the great white nose of the Giant Cliff, for his village is near the sea. I had been shooting rabbits with a rifle, and I was beginning to climb the narrow path that leads to the top of the cliff, when I noticed a man moving along by the rocks towards the path. While I was on the shore he must have been amongst the rocks, and now he began to climb the cliff behind me, taking care to keep a good distance away. When I rested, he rested, and he seemed most unwilling to catch me up. He no doubt said to himself, 'There is no hurry ; I will wait here until that person is gone.' Well, I waited just over the brow of the cliff, where he could not see me, and when he did appear I inquired of him the way to his village. And like all nervous people he could not give me

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a direct answer ; he spoke as if he did not know. And then he told me the different attributes of the ways that I might take ; and last of all he offered to show me the way himself.

“ As we walked I knew Mr. Thomas was what we call in the polite world a ‘crank’ ; he walked as if at any moment the earth might give way ; and as we looked across the bay towards the Isle of Slingers, he kept a very proper distance from the cliff edge.

“ My first impression of Mr. Thomas was a curious feeling that he was hiding something ; or that he was the guardian of a treasure of which he was not allowed to speak. And he seemed to fear me, and when I pointed out to him the beauty of the green seaweed far below us he turned hurriedly towards the setting sun. I belong myself to one of the liberal professions, and I

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have cultivated a proper manner to use with my inferiors. Mr. Thomas spoke rather quickly, in a low tone, and I did not often reply ; he wanted to say foolish things about the weather, and I let him. I could tell how nervous he was by his hurried way of speaking, and by the way he fell over the white stones that coastguards put along the path and whitewash, so that they may see the way on a dark night ; and I walked in the path, there being only room for one.

“ Mr. Thomas talked of his favourite snug corners by the sea, as a bird would of his resting places, with the fear all the time in his heart that I might rob him of them. And then he talked about the working people that are called labourers, because he happened to see one. We passed a tumulus covered with brambles, the chief growth in that part of the country. Between the brambles there was a way,

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as though someone was in the habit of climbing up,—no doubt Mr. Thomas himself,—and Mr. Thomas found his way to the top and looked towards the distant hills, and then at me. And he told me about a clump of trees (I never looked, though he pointed at it) that marked a deep pit like the upper part of a funnel, so he said, that an old botanist called Culpepper used to boil his potions in, and he told me that in a certain direction there was a line of hills that marked the middle of the county ; and a tower that was somebody's 'folly,'—goodness knows where that was. We talked of poetry ; Mr. Thomas told me about one of his favourite poems, a poem that could be loved, he said, by a saint and by a sinner. He had the book in his pocket and read me one verse as we walked. He said it was virginal, a verse for a child to learn. Here is the verse ; he read only one.

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“The dew no more will weep  
The primrose’s pale cheek to deck ;  
The dew no more will sleep  
Nuzzled in the lily’s neck ;  
Much rather would it tremble here  
And leave them both to be thy tear.

“And thus we walked over great fields, filled, every one of them, with stones, everlasting stones ; not smooth shining pebbles—sharp zigzag flints. And the chalk of the hills in places broke through the thin covering of grass, like the skin of a beggar showing through her ragged clothing. We went through a gate that a man whom we had seen slouching along in front of us had left half open. Mr. Thomas persisted in spending quite ten minutes to fasten some barbed wire round the top of this gate ; and in answer to my question as to why he did it, he said, ‘These people never shut the gates ; the sheep will get in, and when I come this way again, I shall have to drive

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them out.' 'The farmer ought to put up a notice about the gate,' I said. 'It was the farmer who left the gate open,' Mr. Thomas gently replied.

"I left Mr. Thomas by his own door, or rather by his railings, and I walked through the village street to the inn. The innkeeper was feeding his pigs, and after he had finished feeding them, he showed me a badger that he kept in a barrel. Mr. Thomas' house was visible from the inn-yard, and I could see that he was hoeing in his garden. I looked around me. The land was not a fat land; the grass, like the thin clothes of the labourers, only just covered up the poverty beneath. I asked the landlord about Mr. Thomas, but he had not much to tell me, beyond the fact that 'he lived over there,' pointing to the house.

"Mr. Thomas did not give me a very cordial welcome when I called in the morning, and he did not want to come

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out ; but I dragged him from whatever he was doing, I don't know what it was, and compelled him to come out with me. We walked along the cold hills, cold as if the ice that made and modelled them still froze the ground. We went along a path going continually uphill, like the narrow path that leads to heaven. And in a hollow place near a pond we came upon an empty cottage, near a tumble-down barn ; we looked through the broken window at the stone floor and open grate of the living-room—an Englishman's home in Arcadia. 'No one lives here now,' he said ; 'that is why I like to come this way.'

"The next thing that we did was to tramp across a heavy ploughed field, and then along by a hedge filled with nettles and sharp thorns, and in one place I saw the half-eaten carcass of a sheep ; and in a pit there were the bones of a horse among the cowslips.

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Mr. Thomas regarded these phenomena with the same gentle look, as being part of the accepted order of things. After a while Mr. Thomas grew less shy of me, and he began to confide to me some of his ideas—ideas about God and the weather. We will take his ideas about the weather first. He thought the raindrops beat with persistent spite upon him; and that the wind buffeted him as if it loved doing it. He thought the storms always waited until he wanted to go out, and then fell merrily upon his head. And yet I think he was in a better mood on a dull day than when the sun shone. He did not like to turn away from the sun, and was never easy with his back to it. This may have been the instinctive willing of some plant in him, for his nature belonged to the plant tribe that grows in wild places. He used to lie on the long withered cliff grass in the winter and take in to his



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body the little warmth that came from the sun, like a beaten elder tree that waited for the spring.

“I liked to torment him and drive him out of his last stronghold, and then see what he would say ; and how he would try to escape me. Mr. Thomas belonged to the type of man that can be cut down in a moment with words. He could be put out of action with one or two simple remarks that touched his pride ; and then he would simply go into his shell like a hermit crab ; he would detach himself from all that he had and keep only his skin. And then if the attack were pushed, which was always worth doing, that last hope in his own life would be taken away, and he would feel himself completely gone into nothingness. This condition of his completed the jest, and he would walk home across the stony fields, a little tired.

“ But after a day or two he would pos-

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sess himself again, fully clothed and in his right mind, believing in himself, and even going so far as to think that he had in his soul a few little things of which he might be proud, and also that he had a few more cigarettes to smoke. And the next time I saw him I would give him a hint about the good that he might find in himself if he ate a little of the apple that grows in the middle of the garden. And I explained, as well as I could, that everything is made by God for the amusement of man ; and that the good and evil in life should be kept very separate, otherwise we should never enjoy being evil, or ever be bored by being good.

“I tried in this way to teach Mr. Thomas a little about the ethics of the Christian churches, especially the Anglican Church of Great Britain. I told him that popular opinion, the opinion of the butchers and their customers, would be for ever unto the end against

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‘that horrid German,’ and ‘that wicked Jew,’ who both tried to untie the priestly knot that hangs up the world, and not only hangs it up, but holds it up.

“I tried to explain to Mr. Thomas that the mass of humanity loves to be good and to sin, by turns—to sin and repent and to sin again, just as the sun repents and covers the earth with its glory after the dark rains of the night. It is necessary, I said, for the priest to invent every morning new sins for the people ; golden calves and pretty dancers. And the priest must show the people how to enjoy them. And sometimes for a change he can throw into the cup of their gladness one or two little pills of virtue, for the sake of their bowels.

“‘And now, my good Mr. Thomas,’ I said, ‘for Heaven’s sake do not throw me into that ice water of beyond thought that your mad German loved

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so well.' Mr. Thomas used to wait for a shining light to come ; he used to wait like a hen brooding over her eggs ; he used to brood in odd corners and try to hatch a little god out of his eggs—a little god that would save his type, the outcast monk type, from the well-deserved stones and jeers of the people. I need not say that all his eggs were addled, for he never got anything out of them, sit as long as he might.

“He would not believe, although I told him over and over again, that it is the weight of the mass of humanity that bears the world along ; and that nothing can change its course, not even the lightning of the gods, nor the thoughts of little monk priests. Mr. Thomas never even hatched a little devil out of the eggs that he brooded over, and he knew it. He knew that he had found nothing ; he knew that he had searched the orchard and had not even found the crab ; he knew that all his

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life he had lived in a mystic alley that leads no whither.

“I tried to show him what life is, as we know it, as we the happy ones have made it; and I told him that the one thing to avoid, the one thing that really gives pain, is what is called ‘the serious state of mind’—the brooding, the dark brooding of the dead stars. ‘The good God looks down from on high.’ ‘The priests say so, and that is all we want to know about Him.’ And when I said this Mr. Thomas gently stroked his beard, and smiled, and inquired whether I had a cigarette in my case, as he had left his at home.

“Standing on the cliff top one day and looking towards the town over the sea, I asked Mr. Thomas why he did not live down there, instead of the dreary spot that he had chosen. He waited for a little while and then said, ‘I like the language of these hills better; they

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are higher up' (which indeed was true), 'and amongst those church spires I fear that the people do not always speak the truth.' 'But,' - I said, 'their lies are public lies ; they live by public opinion ; they all have one object in life, and what that is, the smallest servant girl knows best.'

" Human life is only innocent when it lives in the fairyland of fancy ; if it goes running after the gods, it becomes mad ; if it goes running back to the beasts, it becomes like a nation at war ; the best thing it can do is to stay where it is. Humanity reached its goal when it became man ; and it is in the same world now, because this is the only world it can have ; it must go on just as it has gone on, and that for ever. 'That German' thought of something more wonderful than Man, and he ran to the gods — mad. 'That Jew' thought of something wonderful ; He thought of adopting a Father ; and He

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thought of mankind loving one another ;  
and He went to the Cross.

“Man develops on certain lines, and then explodes and goes on again on the same lines. If he tries to climb up to the gods, he goes mad, and a vulture devours him. He is only right if he remains just what he is, simply a man. He has scholarships, science, and a million industries. He has municipal gardens, and school playgrounds. His priests are now grown quite big enough to drive away the little gods that come in the night ; and he can always enjoy excitement in the body politic by pinching the ears of the women. He can believe in a future life ; he can believe in a future death ; he can believe that Christ is God, and that God is Christ, and that Christ is man, but he can never fill the cup fuller than his manhood will hold.

“See how genius at a certain point always breaks down. ‘That German’

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went a little too far, and when he came to the two kings and the last Pope, he went mad. And the other one, 'the Jew'—He went on preaching very well to the people, until by a sad mischance, the people began to understand what He said, and when the people understood, instead of going mad themselves, they killed Him.

"That is the way of the world, and it happens like that because man's mind can only go to a certain point, and then it breaks. Every mind breaks when it does more than a man can do, and it breaks in unexpected ways. The duty of a philosopher (and the modern philosopher knows his duty) is to keep the sheep ; that is to say, to drive the wolves of thought away from the people, and hang the wolves up—in hard and long words, in the philosophers' complex minds that are fitted out with little hooks to hang each wolf up by.



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“The priests who also know their duty have to keep the gods away from the flock, for fear the flock might give away some of its wool, or perhaps even a ewe lamb, here and there, without a priest’s blessing.

“If either of these guardians neglects his duty, the people quite rightly devour him. ‘It looks like that—that is how the world looks,’ answered Mr. Thomas. And yet why should we not believe a little and love a little, even if we do go mad?

“I think sometimes when I come home tired to my gate, that I must not come in. I think that I must go on walking past my gate, through the one or two villages where I am known, and then on and on and on.

“When Jesus adopted God as His Father, He made God begin again as a Babe. When He took everything away from Himself, He took everything away from His Father ; we that

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are fathers know that a son can do that. No one need try to take God and put Him upon a great white throne, when His Son has taken Him down. When the Son gave up all power, the Father had to give up all power too ; when the Son gave up life, it was the Father's life that He gave up, as well as His own.

“There is no need for us to become anything more than what we are, in order to believe in the Son of Man. We can enter all that He has entered ; we can give up all that He has given up, without being a superman or a brute beast. It is not in extremes that the road to heaven lies ; the way to life is the same now as it has ever been ; it is in the meaning of things. Surely the Son of God has shown Himself in a form that we, even we, can understand.

“The people marked Him as an enemy, and His presence in us will one

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day make the impossible come to pass ; that day will come. We feel that we are at an end ; we feel that we are come to our goal ; but at the same time we know that there is 'that other' belonging to us, 'that other one' who is with us and knows no end.

“Every day I look at the fields as though I am soon to bid them an eternal farewell. Perhaps my life has passed through many bodies and I am the last. A star of life with its own colour, its own raiment, and its own joys has entered into me to die. But the star has still its desires and its longings ; I do not want its light to go out like a snuffed candle. I would like it to live again in some other body ; I would like it to feel the earth through many, many other lives. I do not wish to be the grave for the death of a star. I want it to carry my life on, and on, and on. And yet it is only when a star is dying in you that you can feel its

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life ; and it is only when a star is dying in you that you can feel the sorrows of the Son of Man.

“ And this is the way that Mr. Thomas used to talk. I waved my stick as I passed his gate on my way back to town. He held a spade in his hand, and was digging a hole in the ground for a new post to hold up his railings. I waved my stick, and he, taking very little notice, went on with his work.”

When anyone reads a confession like this they should express no philistine reflection such as, “This good man might have done better with his life” ; or, “If we all start writing confessions, what a world it would be !” I suppose I have the priest’s instinctive delight—or love, shall we say—of hearing a tale that comes from a man’s fear rather than from his wits ; and in speaking or writing a confession, one is always coming near to something ugly

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in the dark of oneself. I touch the hoof, or the fur, or the horns, or the tusks, as I write.

It is this ugly thing that has a way of peeping out at us when we talk about ourselves ; and the sight of half its head, not a very pretty half, makes most people begin to talk about something else. If you, my dear child or brother, begin to tell a few secrets of your own being, you will know what I mean. You will find, dear friend, when you take your pen to begin, and poke about with your finger and thumb into your own heart, that you touch something not at all nice, not exactly what you thought.

It is the custom, I know, not to confess ; to let that inside of you remain hidden under a well-ordered life ; and besides it does not do to risk being laughed at by the people. I know that in every confession there is always worse left behind than what is said ;

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for we none of us dare to utter the whole of our wickedness. I cannot help thinking that many of the pangs of human life were quieted and stilled by the use of the confessional. Anyhow, to look at oneself with rather more than a critical eye is a good thing ; if only to show the gods that they could do a little better with our substance another day.

One can see, while writing odd things about oneself, that inside the mob still rules, just as it does outside in the world. And the mob may be rioting quite merrily under a policeman's jacket, or corrupting innocence under lawn sleeves in a cathedral. I think that the mob, — I know them, even hidden in a snug English village, — I think that the mob will always rule ; for it is by the law of hate and not by the law of love that the world lives and has its being.

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In the world there will never be security, but there will always be excitement ; and there is no reason why we should not sometimes get excited about ourselves, and by so doing reveal ourselves as something more than creatures to be fed.

I think every father would do very well to write a book of his own shortcomings for his children to read. And perhaps so many fathers, who nowadays appear so very foolish to their families, might by writing their confessions, show their children that they did not sign cheques and say family prayers by clockwork, being wound up every evening by the cook in the best parlour. The fear of looking a fool has cost the world more good lives than it wots of.

We go about the world being friendly, but the mob always tells us

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where to go, and how to confine our friendliness to the railway carriage, and our morals to our homes. The mob soon breaks our windows, if we do not behave after its manner. All our little moral sensations are upon the surface of our lives; it is the great immoralist that lies beneath. And you have not got to go very far into the lives of the people before you come upon him.

In writing my confessions I began to take notice of my pride. I found myself so proud that I preferred to leave the camel drivers and suffer cold, rather than endure their loud laughter. And I see quite well that there is no getting to the bottom of the pride of a man. We cannot take cover from our pride. I think it quite likely that the least pride is found in the busiest man, and the most, in an idle slave. We cannot get away from our pride, do what we will. And my pride is quite a plain



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thing to see even in these pages. I show it on purpose ; I am proud ; I like to be proud ; I intend to be proud. I know the pride of a saint when he shuts himself up away from the world ; I know the pride of a sinner when he boasts to the mob of what he can do. The very fact that I love those lines of Bunyan,

“He that is down need fear no fall,  
He that is low no pride.”

shows how proud I am. Ah ! shepherd boy in the valley, I know thy ways, and it is quite possible that the Lord Mayor of London has a heart less proud than thine.

We that love to be at the bottom, we saints in the wilderness, we humble people in the fields, we peaceful people in leafy lanes—it is with reason that the city man, the wicked sinner, should treat us somewhat roughly, for he fears us. He fears that if he did not speak very loud, we might make him take

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off his shoes when he comes into our garden, and stand in the mud with bare feet. Perhaps if we of the saintly tribe, we exempt ones,—if we were compelled to be iron kings, or wheat kings, or petrol kings,—it is possible that we saints might relinquish some of our abominable pride. The very size of our palaces would then diminish some of our bigness. I can make myself out to be a saint, I can pull myself to pieces as a sinner, I can show myself as a fool in a world of folly. We are all little men that eat off the earth's crust ; I am one of the mob, that is all that can be said.

I am told by one wiser than I that I must throw more light upon this subject of immortality that I have alluded to here and there. I am quite willing to make my meaning more clear ; I do not want to be misunderstood, and this is what I think. I believe that the more dead anything is the more it

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lasts ; and the more ignoble a thing is the longer it lasts. The most base thing in me longs the most to live for ever. I may as well say that it is from my own feelings that I get my thoughts upon immortality. And I know myself a little. I also know that I get the thought from Him.

The most wonderful idea that has ever come to man came to Jesus. It came to Him silent, subtile, and like the lightning. The idea that came to Him was this : He wished to create for a moment a state of vision with no earthly everlasting deadness about it ; to create a new heaven and a new earth. The longer anything lasts, the worse it always becomes, but the divine idea came to Jesus without beginning and without end ; and in a moment it became Himself.

We cannot conceive the lightning rapidity in which the vision of true

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life enters in and passes out of our minds. Our minds do not like this kind of thing ; they are not used to it ; only by a strange chance Jesus held the new idea for a moment, and that moment gave Him time to understand, because He was the one that was ready to understand.

Just such a wonderful moment may have come by a happy or an unhappy chance to a beast, and that was the moment that made the beast into a man. What Jesus saw and lived, we may see and live ; only we prefer the immortality of our earth that we have always had, to the new heaven of Jesus. We would rather live in part dead for a great many lives, than share with Jesus His kingdom for a moment. His vision, His idea, was the frailest beginning, the most delicate and the most quickly killed, of any idea that has ever come to man.

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Our immortal baseness is trained and schooled ; is organized to cast out at once this kind of vision. We know only too well that our old happiness, our old Godhead, our old immortality, is imperilled by it. We know the danger of a vision that filled one man so suddenly with burning light, burning Him up in a moment, and leaving Him only a wild mad thing, crying out desperate and loving words. We know the danger of a vision that burnt the immortal man in Him right out in a moment, and left a new man with a strange, a wild, and unearthly courage, a man from whom the mob took toll and laughter, and then after a little while, fearing for themselves, hanged Him upon the cross.

The whole atmosphere of our lives bursts out in rage against this other sense, this new vision, that ends in a moment our immortality. We cannot graft our everlasting life into the vision .

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that He beheld ; our immortality goes on and on, and if we want to enter the Vision of Jesus, we must stop our chariot. This vision, this new heaven, is life in a moment ; but our way of life is everlasting years.

The result of the vision is quite clear in the kind of man that Jesus was. Though the vision died down in Him at times, all the signs of our immortal greed for life, in His life, are dead. He begins to eat of the earth as a sacrament, and, wonder of wonders, He can love and bless men instead of turning fiercely upon the will to devour,—He must have seen that in the mob,—instead of cursing the base lives of men, and their hungry laughter, instead of casting all the thoughts of man away, He blesses them. He opened the way to a new life, and He longed that the vision that will free man from his im-

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mortality may come to all, and be received by all.

No wonder man fled from this kind of freedom ; for we prefer to retain the immortality that is our right. I can hear many people declaim, being quite amazed at my utter disregard for established beliefs. I can hear them shout, "We do not want to end, thou thrice foolish Mr. Thomas, we do not want to end ; we will all most willingly, without any asking of questions, take the immortality that you in your folly so roundly cry out upon. Give us that immortality ; it is just what we all pray for. Remove from us, take out of our sight for ever, this vision that takes away our precious lives ; do not leave us alone with Jesus ; perhaps some good kind pastor will come between. Do not take anything more away from us ; we want more than our lives, we want to go on living." I can hear people of the world shout out at me like this ;

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and I say to them, "Goodly people, kindly livers, who sometimes offer life-belts to women when the ship is sinking, I hear all your loud shouting, I answer quite calmly, 'You will go on living, dear children; did not your fathers hate, just as you hate; did not they get things, just as you get things; did not they eat their dinners and leave the beggars outside, just as you and I eat our dinners?'"

I can promise that our pretending at little games of Virtue never in the least hampers our real lives; our real lives go on through many years just in the same way. Your thoughts, exactly your thoughts and not another's, will be always here; the immortal part of you, your man-self, must go on, because it does not desire to be anything else than itself. It is never worn out; it has the best of systems—



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separate bodies to live in ; when you are old, or perhaps before that time, you will die ; but that will mean nothing to you, and your immortality will just dance away as merrily as ever.

All this is very easy to explain ; but the way of Jesus is not so easy. He made a way that opposed everything that we have seen or heard of, and most of all, it undermined our immortality. His way ends our old lives in a moment ; because if you take away our anger, our greed, our hatred, our getting on, our eating the black man, our biting the white woman, our sermon-preaching, our amusements with young ladies, our walking to church, our throat-cutting, our afternoon tea-parties, and all the tools we have made for killing other people, and the medicine for killing ourselves,—if you take away all our good deeds,—we know what they are, —if you take all these arts and fancies

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away from a man, if you take them away you will leave no man at all, you will leave nothing.

“Ah ! but my soul, Mr. Thomas, you have quite forgotten my soul ; surely when the labours and little amusements of my life are taken away, my soul will live. When, as a good man tired with all my self-sacrifice, tired with all my good deeds, tired with all my kind treatment of little children, I leave my poor worn-out body, is not that the proper moment for my soul to save me ? ” Our souls, my good people, are the least certain of all our possessions ; our souls are not possessions at all. I will tell you what my soul is. My soul is a waiting, hesitating, longing silence ; it is the most delicate, the most ethereal, the most ready to die away of all the silent noiseless feet that we feel moving in our lives. And it waits, and often its flame goes out while it waits. It is not chained to

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the moods; it is the waiting silence in us that is free.

The life of the world is as it is made to be; it can never be anything else; it can never really change. The little children of the world are happy sometimes, when they get what they want. But there is not so very much happiness to be given away between the stars, and there is a very vast deal of misery.

This is our immortality, because all the feelings are really exactly the same to everyone, though some of course feel more and some less.

When a Prime Minister succeeds in negotiating a secret Treaty of Alliance somewhere or other, for the good of the war-outfit trade of his country, and the other names and seals are duly set to it, the exalted feelings of this good Prime Minister are exactly the same

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as those of our chimney-sweep—dead now, honest man—when he has brought down from our parlour chimney with one good jerk a large quantity of soot. And when an old lean woman, the leanest in the village, slinks home with a few stolen sticks from the squire's wood, her feeling of exultation is just the same as Mr. ——'s feeling when he has made a corner in wheat, in Wall Street, a place I seem to have heard of. A Gentleman Farmer riding home from market in his motor, after having sold a cow at a good war price, that has gored one of his milk hands the day before, feels just like a naughty girl who has successfully robbed a foolish young man of his gold watch, in a flat in Houndsditch.

We share all our good actions with other people, just as we share the air that we breathe. All our actions are made of exactly the same stuff, like

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the stars — the eternal stuff out of which everything is made, everything except the lightning that destroys them. To that lightning Jesus opened His bosom ; it struck dead all His immortality ; in one flash it sent a new wonder through the old immortal stuff of which He was made. Ah ! there was irony in that shaft of light from that other place, for it left only one feeling the same in Jesus ; one feeling it could not kill ; one feeling that He had in common with all men even unto the end—I mean the feeling of sorrow.

So great is the charm of really dying that the ordinary death of a man is a little thing in comparison. The feelings are gay or sad, wicked or good in every man : they are over all the earth. Of course, the bodies that hold them change because the bodies wear out ; but the feelings are always hungry, always the same, always yourself. When

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the squire's new motor makes you skip into a muddy ditch, the squire feels just like you feel when you make Mr. Thomas walk by your side in the gutter ; and the feelings of men do not die.

The feelings or the moods of God, as I used to call them—it is natural to me to change my words a little—must have some kind of bottle to hold them ; they have you, with your beating heart, your brain, your nerves, and your bones, that are, I fear, getting a little too stiff to enjoy dancing. They have you, and they make you dance, as they do everyone else. They even made Him dance a little round a barren fig-tree, but not in a way that pleased the people.

At first the people thought Him a quack doctor that did not want to be paid for His work, that went about healing for fun ; and then they thought

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Him a crank ; and then a mischief-maker ; and last of all an alien in the world.

Is it not strange that only a man who has felt the lightning and who has felt the immortal moods fall from him,—all save the mood of sorrow,—is it not strange that this is the sort of man that loves the world, that really understands the world, and accepts the world ? And He can even love the people who think they are good ; and what must be more easy, He can also love the bold sinner ; and He alone can kiss without fear the shamed form of tired outraged bitterness. He can love all of it—He the One that bled so soon. The most terrible pang of all, pity—the flower of sorrow—that we who have the everlasting feelings dare not endure. He endured it. And pity for the jackal. It is easier, far easier, to pity a white sick child than a red monster of greed.

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He could pity us because we all feel so safe in the world.

How we all enjoy the sense of security that it gives to know that everyone has the same feelings as oneself. We know all the kindly, loving feelings of our friends ; they are the same feelings as ours, because they are ours ; and we are all quite safe with one another. Sometimes, perhaps, in an ill hour, a mass of men who have had bad dreams in the night about bears and lions want to march to the seaside ; and another mass of men, feeling their interests lie in another direction, oppose them ; and they all feel just alike. The others may have dreamt of great eagles. All these proceed quite calmly to casting each his millions through the fire of Hell itself.

These moving coloured pictures of Human Madness make a ghastly show when they happen to come to pass ;



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only we all learn from watching them what our feelings are and what they can do. They can tear our bodies to pieces *en masse* ; and instead of going out with swords and spears to judge the moods of God, we only talk to each other about the wickedness of other countries.

Yes, there is something in the desire of Jesus to escape and to die. And to this desire, and to this longing, do the priest natures of the world come ; here and there out of all manner of holes in the rocks, out of all manner of minds, they move towards the annihilation of themselves.

From whence comes the lightning that stings to death the feelings that live for ever ? So asks the young man void of understanding with the leer of an angler over the dark waters. Ah ! that is easier asked than answered. But it may be,—I am not sure,—but it

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may be that even the moods of God end somewhere! Shall not the immortal feelings have an end somewhere in some men? Or is it the beginning of a new heaven and a new earth that passeth man's understanding? I do not know; in this place even the priest must do what other little foolish children do; he must go out into the garden by the big door.

What I do know is, that there is something more godlike about the lightning that kills in a moment, than about all the feelings that live for ever. Sometimes I think that it is the glorious presence of utter absolute extinction, of death—that is, real death—that gives the magic to the lightning.

I wonder, do the moods of God tire of their manifold disguises in man? Do they begin to find the eternal motion in clay bodies hard to bear? Does He desire to die? And did He choose

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the man who called Him Father for His last home? Did the everlasting moods that are God will a grave as well as a birthplace in man? Did He at last desire His own end, and did He begin to die in Jesus? Perhaps, who can say?

The moods may themselves want to turn aside and to sleep—never to rise again, never again to torment themselves and the clay that they live in. I do not know; the exultation that the lightning vision brings into being cannot be explained in words; it may be an end or it may be a beginning. To Jesus it certainly gave sometimes one and sometimes another of these thoughts. I think He longed for it to be a token, a promise of something more wonderful even, than the end of God. He longed for it to be a promise of new life. It may have been such a promise, or it may have been a promise of death. One thing seems to

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be quite sure, and that is that the vision has more in it than the simple death or life of one creature. Everyone feels that the body and the life of Jesus were a battleground more terrible than that ; and that the happenings in Him surpassed anything that has ever before happened in man. If the everlasting moods did indeed find in Him a willing sacrifice, an altar where they could be quite burnt out, no wonder that His Ways were very little understood by the people.

Why Jesus is a figure of such intensely human interest to mankind is because He stands always at the parting of the ways. In Him end, it may be, the everlasting moods ; in Him, it may be, God Himself ends ; or the sudden lightning of a supreme joy begins. And His kind of life was ever the opposite of man's doings and sayings. He lived in order to destroy man's immortal

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ways, and He stabbed everywhere, wherever He saw human greed everlasting.

If anyone deserved a blessing upon earth, it was in His eyes the sinner. He saw that sin ends quicker and changes quicker than righteousness; and the righteousness of the leaders of the people was to Him the most lasting and the most intolerable ugliness that He saw anywhere.

Everyone knows how His words have been twisted and turned exactly and completely inside out. Of course they have; men do not give up their greed for nothing; and they soon began to think that His Heaven was a shadow in the water, a large shadow of that hunk of meat that they with their dog-like teeth held in their half-opened mouths. And some amongst men, the good saints and hermits, the good Bishops of the flock, let their hunk of meat drop for the shadow, like the dog

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in the fable ; and then there was no help for it. They had to believe in Heaven, and so they waved the fairy wand of immortality over the place where their hunk of meat sank ; and they present to us—these very good ones—rather an odd, and not, I fear, very noble picture ; for while they pretend to believe in the shadow of another life, all the time they are digging their snouts in the mud (they have now changed to swine), and searching for their lost meat as the money-lenders in that old French book searched for rusty nails. They are not altogether beautiful objects for our contemplation here upon earth. We prefer the more honest sinners. Avoid the good ones, little girls and boys of the earth, and go and dance with those that take and eat honestly the lion's share. We know that Lion ; there is something honest and open about him ; the immortal laughers surround him as he gambols

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and frolics in new-mown hay. High up to his godlike mouth he lifts the holy bottle of human life. He drinks. His life is not here nor there ; he lives truly and entirely himself in every moment.

There is no cry in his heart, "What can I do to be saved ?" He is content ; the earth is good enough for him. He spends his treasure ; he does not hide it, as a certain country did their treasure in a fortress, until the next war ; he spends it all, and when the next war comes, he dies ; that is the end of the lion.

Between the lion of life and Jesus, that sad Stranger, there are innumerable moving pictures of little men and women. Children of the earth, I would have you go to the sad Stranger when the moods of the Father get their claws full of your blood. In one way this Stranger is like the lion ; He is not afraid of the Father. Go to Him ;

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He will give to you what no other man has ever dared to give ; He will give you Himself.

Remember before you take Him what He has done. Remember His crime ; remember His sin ; remember that He has in a moment put an end to the world. No wonder that when the animal instinct of the herd became awake, when they began to understand what He was doing, that they killed Him and freed Barabbas. "To the cross with Him !" they cried out, "He threatens our very Jehovah," which was only too true. And he did more than threaten ; He slew, He broke in upon God with a fierce fire, a fire more fierce than God's when He breaks in upon men. He knows, this Son of Man, that a moment of destruction is better than many years of creating ; for the soul of a great work of art feels more of its life when the shells are bursting upon it than when the sober eyes of



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good sightseers peer and blink about it  
and the beads of the prayers rattle in its  
long nave.

Then the destroyer meets the creator  
in the great awakening ; these two  
heroic ones hold hands at last ; their  
souls meet and end. Nothing, not even  
the moods of God, can find its true soul  
until it is destroyed ; and even the lion  
of laughter that drinks for ever the cup  
of earth's richest wine becomes a little  
fat clown with pink cheeks, like a  
dancer in a show, when the two terrible  
ones meet, the creator and the destroyer.

When we see the work that Jesus has  
done, when we see the great white  
throne rent and torn and lying like any  
other broken chair at our feet, when  
we see the temple whereon the creative  
mind a little overstepped its mark in  
decoration nothing but scarred walls,  
when we see all this as we do see it,

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we know that a soul has felt its life burn, and its death cool it for ever.

This is what we come to in His life. He seemingly had no fear of the great, the powerful, the almighty ; the immense terrible coils of the immortal snake had no terrors for Him. The moods fierce and utterly blind stayed their fatalistic dancing in Him ; He died to break the power of God. And now the moods creep silently in the earth ; they cannot sting as they used to ; they can live immortal as they used to live in man ; but here lies the difference—they have been conquered.

Many an artist no doubt looks with sorrow at the fall of the great wild monster moods, the Old Testament of man's history, the blind fierce hidden history of his beginning ; the old Creator creating out of the bottom of the sea and upwards, through all times, through all minds. How wildly He

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created, and with what wasteful profusion, we all know. We all know the blindness of Him that used to sit on High, and now it may be that He of His own free will has entered into the Son of Man in order to end His long reign ; perhaps He has become tired of Himself, and His tiredness at some time or another we all feel.

And what do any of us know about ending and beginning? I see that it may have happened like that ; I see a difference in the world since He lived ; I even think I see the moods themselves begin to take a new turn, consoling, liberating, and even becoming free men. I see in the new order, the Babe of Joy, that takes the place of the terrible Majesty of the past ; I see the awful Majesty of the Creator come into our own Grange mead, and lie down amidst a joyous crowd of buttercups and red clover, dimly conscious of a new beginning, and of the laughter of the

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maidens in the village near by. There is, I may tell you, a higher art in the Babe of Joy than in all the deep wild cruelty of the old order ; and after all is said, there was too much of a bully's rod and not enough of a child's laughter in those old days. And surely no one is better pleased than God Himself to come up and find that His terrible moods have not destroyed all the Babe-like laughter upon earth.

We can bless life when we see that the moods have lost their grip upon the mind ; we can bless life when we see man's immortality end and true joy begin ; we can bless life when we see daisies and buttercups grow between the walls of our best works of art, that the shells have let a little light into. Do you remember He talked about destroying the temple and building it in three days—the Golden temple of Solomon, filled with the labour of a

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million artists? He came like a shell into that old great habitation of fierce Godhead—that old temple built up in the mind of man, filled with the work of countless builders; and everywhere, where His heart's blood fell, the temple was destroyed. What cared He for the decorations round the base of the columns? What cared He for here a pomegranate and there a pomegranate at the hem of the garment? What cared He for the golden rods and brackets?

A sigh of great content comes up from our Grange mead, where God lies amongst buttercups and listens to the naughty laughter of little village boys; I cannot see the least willingness on His part to leave the scent of the May clover, in order to go and look at old churches; but I do notice that He turns a little on one side to watch a young man and maid take the path that leads

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to the tavern ; and He looks at them as though they really were His children. They loiter a little by the gate, and He lies back again with His white hands gently resting upon the warm red clover.

In the Old Testament, the old Order, the moods were hemmed in and not allowed to live a natural life in the free air ; they were hemmed in until they gathered strength to burst ; they were like a terrible lake of black waters that filled and filled from beneath, until it at last burst all doors ; the old story of the flood may have had a meaning of this kind.

The hatred and malice, the ungovernable rage of man,—the rage of getting more than his neighbour,—that no painted lying civilization can assuage ; the rage of a suppressed country, being denied a proper proportion of the earth's surface ; the rage of another country that the first should want any more ;

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the immortal greed shut up under the supposed tameness of man ; all the black terrible moods have a way of bursting their chains at times ; of getting loose with a sound and a horrible cry of bloody rage. The old prophets delighted in it ; they wallowed up to their necks in the black waters and enjoyed it. The people did not listen ; do the people ever listen until it is too late ? And then their mangled bodies strew the earth, in the day when the black waters rush out with a horrible sound, and over all the Earth there is black smoke and death and an evil stench.

Jesus saw the danger of all ill content being saved up and prepared in man's mind, and He advised men to act naturally like the flowers ; and to hate and to love like children, forgetting everyone his quarrel when the night comes. He turned the sword with wise justice into the heart of Him that created it.

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But, alas, the moods are a many-headed monster, and to-day the black waters have burst out again amongst men. He could only give to men the charm that can slay them. I want to be able to bless all life truly and wholeheartedly as He blessed it ; I want to be able to bless the sinner as well as the victim of sin ; I want, as every good priest should want, to be glad when I see any sign of Joy anywhere in the earth.

I want to bless all the moods of God, for these too, immortal as they are, will one day desire to end.

I do not say wicked things when I speak of God coming down from His great white Throne of Majesty and Power, and resting in our mead beside the dairy cows, who look at Him with their quiet soft eyes ; I mean no harm. To those who prefer to keep Him as He once was in order to preserve a



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more artistic effect, I have nothing to say ; no doubt they know best ; but I prefer to think of Him as watching with a true Father's love the Babe of Joy that will one day grow up out of His old creation—The Babe of Joy that has taught Him already that a child's laughter is of more value than everlasting life.

This is a day of new Values ; the old days of greed, of getting and keeping, will end ; the old days of holding one's self, of hugging one's self, of living one's self, will end. What a time it was when man's whole hope of happiness was to live for ever ; to always go on helping the same body out of the same dish for ever and ever ; and to that happiness the immortal moods have trained the clay-pots. They have put into us their immortal feelings so strong, that even now as I write, I want to go on living for another day, till

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to-morrow. And this is what we all say — “till to-morrow.” I cannot welcome extinction, because for millions of years the immortal feelings have been desiring more and more hours, more and more to-morrows.

When I think of Jesus, the burden falls. I do not think of extinction. I think of the moment ; I think of how He, in one life, ended the stagnation of immortality. I long to live a moment in Him unfettered and free. Have I explained myself enough now ? Or have I left only a mist about the eyes and a madness in the heart ? I can assure you now, if you have not guessed it before, little and great brethren, that instead of meaning no harm, I mean a great deal of harm. Have we not had nearly enough of the everlasting feuds, of the everlasting jealousy of the moods of God ; would it not be better to use our own minds and to reason away

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from these things? Which is better, I wonder, to lie for a moment where all our finest buttercups grow, or to go on with our greed and getting and hating for ever? If we took His road, and gave up our eternal occupations, our everlasting work, our immortal getting; and in a moment spent that which we did not gather, in a moment of Joy—a moment that cannot be lost because it is true Joy—would it not be better to spend ourselves for it, for such a moment? But, dear brothers, the pleasure of our lives is in hating. We know a little about the merry goblins in the bottom of our hearts; we don't want to cast them out in a hurry. The moods are with us; we play on their side when we amuse ourselves with our little frolics.

It is most easy to call everything degeneration that is not found in the heart of a cruel man. It is most easy

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to call everything madness that is outside the pompous throned power of man's immortal belief. It is really quite easy to call everything mystic stupidity, because it just happens to be not exactly our way of treating dancing girls in the night. I do not dispute with this ; I do not want to slay any child's joy ; neither did He. He came to free the world and to give Joy ; not afterwards,—He knew no afterwards,—but now. I know my hatred of others ; I know my greed for myself ; and I know, my masters, that we all have the same feelings ; I want to break up these feelings and take hold of the new Joy.

When we feel the gladness of our greed, when we feel we have managed well a good business matter after the manner of the world, when we feel we have done something very well indeed, perhaps robbed a few million homes of their halfpence, how the greed goblins, old as God Himself, cringe and lick and

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fawn upon us ; for have we not been carrying on their game a little further ? “ And a very good game too,” you will say. Well, is it ?

I seem to hear at this moment the clamour of something not altogether good ; I see torn bodies, broken, buried in blood, that were a year ago very thoughtless young men ; and I see the evil eye of our greed blinking and cruel ; you have not got to go far from where I write to see its work. Your little happy ways, your little business ways, your little rather long immortal ways, are a cause of all this, my brothers. Without the feelings that you guard so jealously from madness (why are you all so afraid of madness ?) this could not have happened. Without the feelings you enjoy, the shocking face of a woman I once saw in an alley of a great town could never have had written upon it agony unquenchable, agony eternal.

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The moods of God have caused all this ;  
they are causing it still.

And our feelings that go on for ever,  
—that we enjoy so much,—are they  
worth all this terror and horror and  
blood ; do they not after all lick up  
with their evil tongues all the waters  
of real joy out of our lives ; do they  
not take in the cruel grip of their  
eternal desires all our best children ?

Look at the boldness of Jesus ; He  
too was terrible, like a burning of the  
firmament amongst the worlds ; think  
of His courage, this lion in the desert ;  
the disputes He had with the lawyers  
were nothing ; what He really did was  
to stand in the way of the eternal  
moods. He bade them get out of His  
way ; He would have a New Heaven  
and a New Earth ; He would have the  
feelings of a flower ; childlike laughter,  
like one of these little ones, to whom

## OF A HERMIT

every moment is an eternity and whose every hour is a life everlasting.

He stood alone to stem the torrent of greed, the greed of living for ever. "He that saveth his soul shall lose it." And instead of the greed of living, He built up out of the fire of His heart the joy of life.

Consider the day of joy that He created for us ; how freely and light-heartedly we can now cull the flowers after He has shown us the way. The deep hidden waters of the inner darkness that lived underground like a great earth monster, he brought out into the sun. And how like snails the eternal feelings creep and creep in our lives ; how they force us to hide, and to plan and to corrupt ; how they force us to pass the day in gloom, because we are thinking of the morrow, because of the year that is to come. "Take no thought for the morrow." I cannot help seeing almost a vision, as I write

## SOLILOQUIES

of the wonder that He did. And when I think of the fears ; the heavy longings for good things ; our eternal looking forward ; our cringing to time ; our continual longing for future gain ; when I think how oppressed we all are, how filled to the brim with the feelings that want to go on for ever ; I do not know how I can thank Him enough, that opened a way for our freedom.

I cannot think how anyone can regard immortality as anything else but an endless and sad ordeal of the same feelings ; they go on and on, and always serve us the same. They bring simple peasants and quiet homely gentlemen in line as fodder for the cannon ; they let off the poisonous gas ; they drop the bombs in the night ; our little best feelings, yours and mine, are doing it. Our feelings do all this now ; and in the past they



## OF A HERMIT

pinned Him to the Cross. But not before He had sown His life's blood in the earth ; not before His death-cry for Freedom had gone out and been heard.

No doubt the great Artists, the happy portrayers of man's deeds and ways, will scream out with a great rage at the thought of their old occupation being gone. What will happen to bloody rage and blind lust that gave them all such good copy for their long nails ? For was it not ever the moods and the feelings of man's deep black nature that gave the good workers in their creative art the chance to get human-kind on the point of their pen ?

Well, they will have to change, that is all. Jesus did not consider their love of God and His ways when He stood alone in all the earth to face and destroy the moods. The artists that

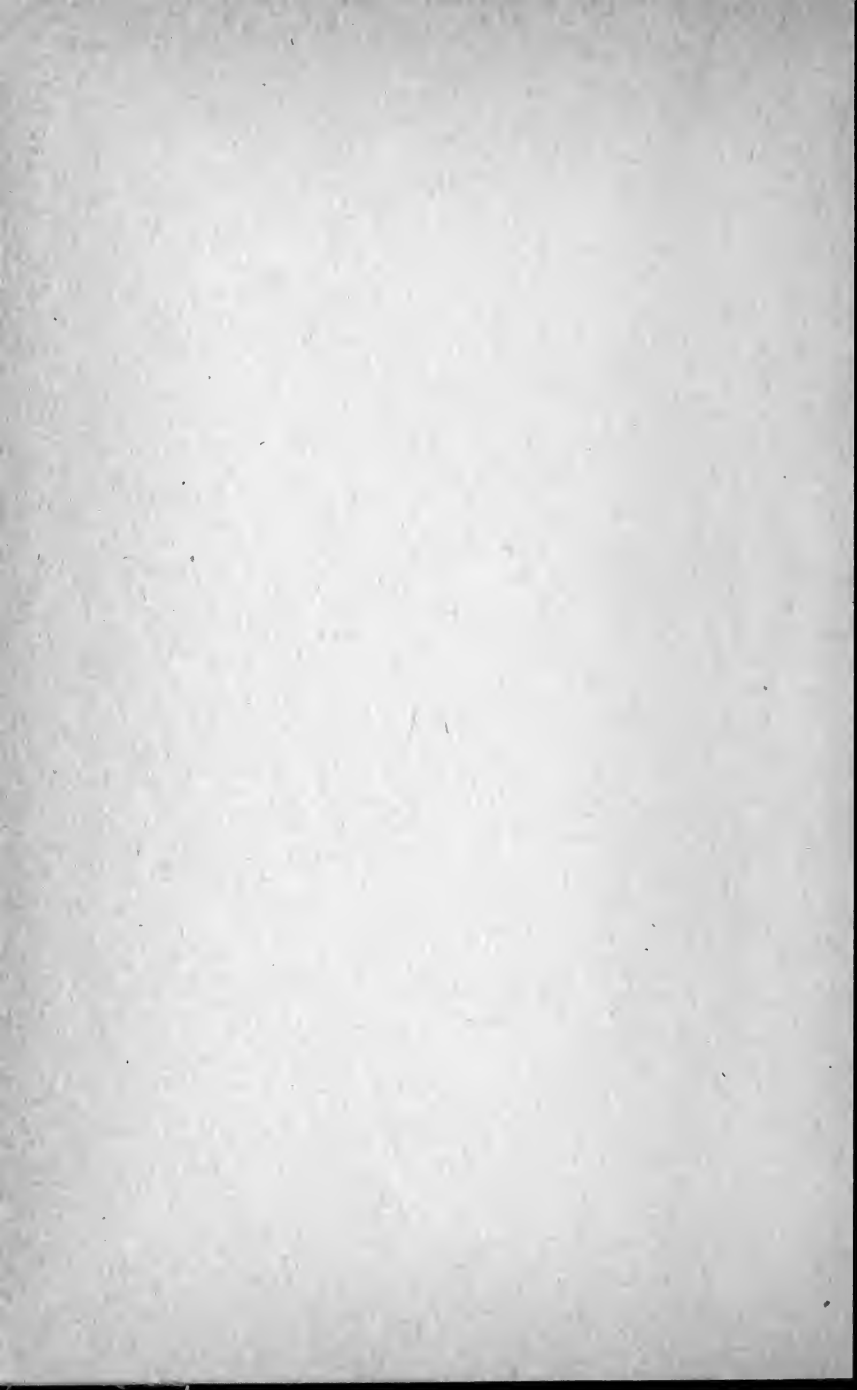
## SOLILOQUIES OF A HERMIT

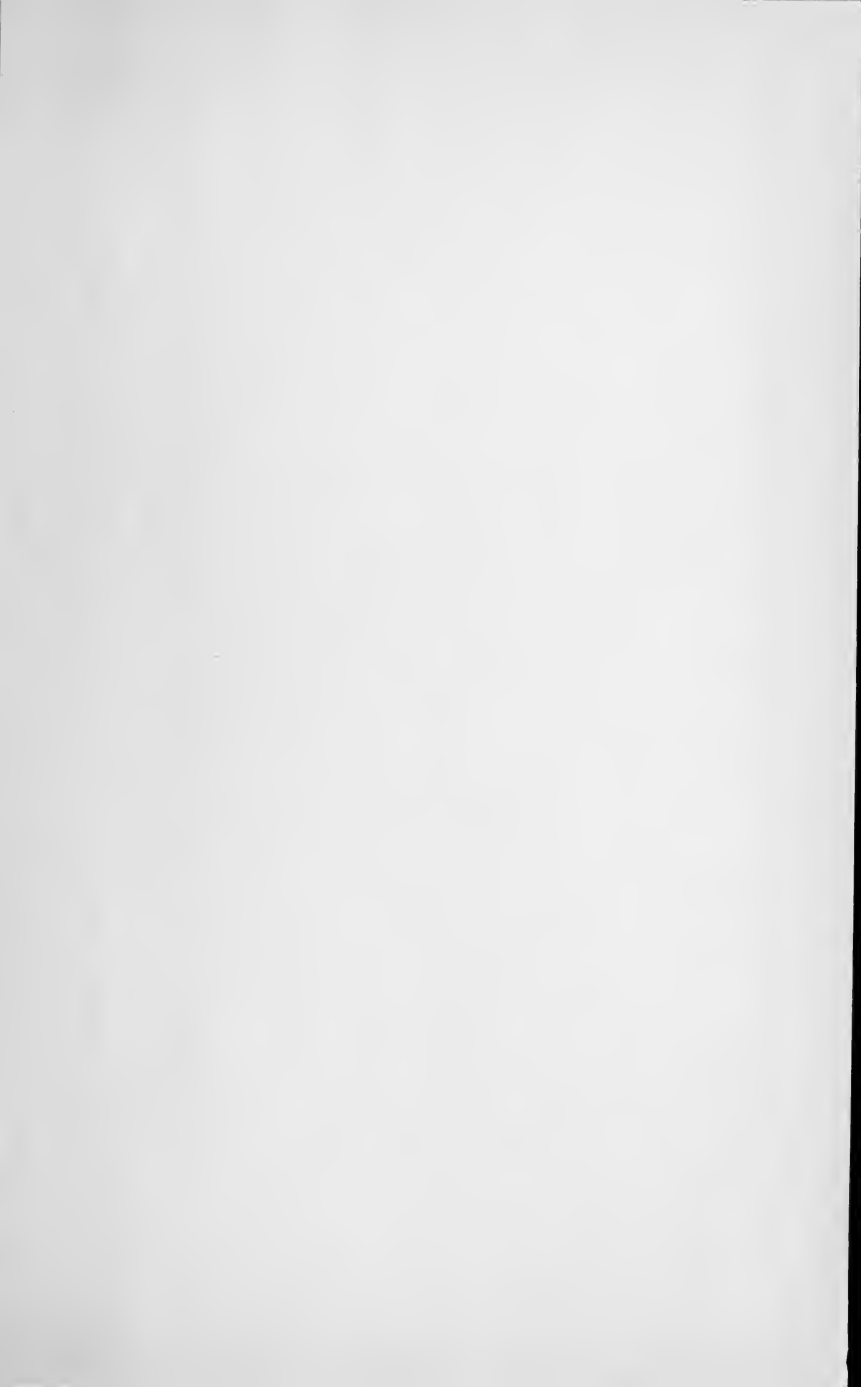
have for so long lived like vultures upon the broken flesh and rotten carcass of human despair must now learn a new trade; they must try to rest awhile in our Grange mead beside the dairy cows, and write poems, until a little of the New Heaven and the New Earth enter into them.

And meanwhile let them bless the maiden and the young man that again loiter through the mead, for it is now evening, on their way home from the tavern; and let them bless the naughty child that lingered for one more solitary dance alone on the Green after all the others had gone.

THE END







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